

THESIS

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF LOCAL MUSIC CULTURE IN NORTHERN COLORADO

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## ABSTRACT

### AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF LOCAL MUSIC CULTURE IN NORTHERN COLORADO

The following thesis investigates common ideologies as manifested in the rhetoric of local musicians, musician employers and musician advocates. I use an autoethnographic method in which I use the interview data of local music culture participants along with my own accounts of my experience as a local musician in order to come closer to locating and describing the experience of local music culture. Through constant comparative analysis of interview data, I located six problematic themes related to the rhetorics of the music community, musician recognition, musician identity, music as a leisure activity, musicians as workers, and musicians as part of a wider industry. I put forth the argument that these areas are of great importance in an understanding of the ways that rhetoric and ideology disempower local musicians. In addition, I argue for a more complex awareness of music ideology by introducing affect theory. Finally, I suggest how community literacy may be used in order to advance the ideas brought forth in this thesis.

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## **Introduction: My Musical Experience and Inquiry**

My path into the world of professional music making was similar to the one many American kids found in the mid-1980's. This path started with bugging my parents to buy me a guitar, taking music lessons at the local music store, and long hours spent alone trying to figure out how my favorite musicians were making the sounds I admired. Forming bands with friends and musical acquaintances contributed to my musical development. It was a gratifying combination of work and fun, taking place within the comforting confines of suburbia and a supportive family structure. It also led to an adventurous and productive career in professional music later in life, which I still enjoy. Of course, as many professional musicians know, making a living from music can be difficult. This has led me to hold several side jobs at restaurants and corporate coffee shops and, most recently to pursue a graduate degree in English, with intentions of becoming an English teacher. My musical path is very much like that of many of my musical peers. It is that rare, problematic experience of finding exactly what one wants to do with their time on the planet, but discovering that such an experience does not enable one to keep an active cell phone, much less food to eat.

The ability to earn a living wage is quite possibly the central concern of musicians, and I believe it has something to do with the way the musician has been discursively constructed in society. There is something noble and virtuous about committing one's life to the pursuit of shaping sound into aesthetic forms which others can then interpret, yet with that respected position comes a kind of social isolation or marginalization. Cultural economist Jacques Attali wrote about the musician, saying, "If he is an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the

reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it” (12). This ambivalent position surely is one element of the struggle that professional musicians go through when trying to maintain a professional identity. The seemingly contradictory values of creativity versus business, leisure versus work, and freedom versus conformity, for example, are constantly at play in a musician’s world. People who work and operate in more conventional circles often say that they are jealous of me because I get to do what I love, yet I doubt they are jealous of my economic situation, which is not unbearable, but certainly could be better.

The ironic thing is that it is not just the public discourse which has contributed to this image of the musician, but also the discourse of the musicians themselves. I have always been interested in *why* musicians do what we do, and I have attempted to discover possible reasons through discussions with fellow musicians. Many of the ambiguities of a musician’s life may in fact seem like irrefutable facts, but I suggest that questioning those “facts” allows musicians to get closer to understanding how we have been discursively constructed in society. While this type of inquiry into music is a labor of love for me, it has the possibility to be more than that, so that is why I have written this thesis on the way musicians rhetorically position themselves in society. I identify with musicians on a level unlike any other group. I have that insider knowledge that most professional musicians have, which is the understanding that music is hard work. Of course, it’s not always hard, but that’s also a complicating factor. As a professional musician, you cannot see exactly what’s coming around the corner. It might be an under-attended performance, an over-served fan, inter-band conflict, or a month of no musical employment.

But when a rehearsal is productive or when the audience is enjoying the music, being a musician is a lot of fun! It involves creating, performing, capturing, and sharing. Naturally, anyone involved in something this powerful will feel strong emotions and



develop particular opinions about it, and like any other activity, they will talk about it through words, sounds, and actions, and/or lack of action. Persuasion and identification will come to create reality. And due to the intangible feelings musicians get from music they may never question the way they talk about or act around music. In contrast, this project is my attempt to critically analyze the experience of the local professional musician from the academic perspective of a rhetoric and composition scholar. It is my hope that this thesis will inform local musicians and music studies through an exploration, complication, and examination of local music in Northern Colorado at the beginning of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By using the analytic tools of rhetoric and composition to inform my understanding of local professional musicians in society, as well as the ways in which the larger music industry influences local musicians, I also hope to inform rhetoric and composition studies by shedding light on the capacious possibilities of rhetoric and composition theories and methods in non-classroom, non-linguistic rhetorical contexts. While this may be a new application of rhetoric and composition theory and method, I am not the first to link composition studies and music.

*Where Composition Studies and Music Have Met in the Past*

Considerations of music in the field of rhetoric and composition have primarily dealt with classroom pedagogy and invention. In *The Rhetoric of Cool*, Jeff Rice noticed that "rhetoric and rhetorical invention emerge out of a number of influences: art, film, literature, music, record covers, cultural studies, imagery, technology, and, of course, writing" (10). In "Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where's The Sex Pistols," Geoffrey Sirc used "a cultural parallelism- popular music and composition theory" (974) to complicate the history of rhetoric and composition in order to come to understand why, through disciplinary attempts at "righting writing...(it) could no longer *be*, it had to be a certain way" (975). However, most research having to do with music and composition studies seeks a classroom application of music for inventive purposes.

In a response to Sirc's article, Seth Kahn-Egan used punk rock as a pedagogical tool in order to inspire resistance to dominant discourses, as did writing teacher Optimum One, who is interested in bringing the countercultural elements of punk "to bear on new and timid writers" (358). In "The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine," Rice identified a "hip-hop pedagogy" (453) which used the study of hip-hop digital sampling methods in order to teach juxtaposition techniques to students of the argumentative essay. In this way, Rice hopes that students can "spark the resistance" (469) against the consumerism of pop culture and challenge dominant discourses while simultaneously engaging with them.

While we have seen music being used in the classroom as *topoi*, as these examples suggest, there are fewer studies which use the kind of rhetorical theory particular to composition to complicate the actual lived music experience of musicians. However, Thomas Rickert and Byron Hawk do provide a theoretical "ground" from which to begin such a study. In the 1999 "Writing/Music/Culture" issue of *Enculturation*, Rickert and Hawk, in their article "Avowing the Unavowable: On the Music of Composition," said that "Music is neither composer nor composed; rather, it is a sound-image that composes-creates compositions, assemblages, links. Music composes us when we listen to it and when we write about it" (Rickert and Hawk). This idea positions music as a cultural force which composes individuals as opposed to the Romantic understanding of music as an art form composed by autonomous individuals engaged in creativity.

Studies of music often reveal deeply embedded notions of Romanticism. Characteristics of the "high cultural movement" (Stratton 149) of eighteenth and nineteenth century Romanticism include "The idea of genius, cosmic self-assertion, the social alienation of the literary man, (and) the ideal of self-expression" (Grana 67, as quoted by Stratton 149). Music and musicians are often associated with these Romantic characteristics. In *A Common Sense View of All Music*, sociologist John Blackling said,

“Music is essentially about aesthetic experiences and the creative expression of individual human beings in community, about the sharing of feelings and ideas” (146). Cultural musicologist Simon Firth related a similar awareness of the Romantic understanding that “Good music is the authentic expression of something- a person, an idea, a feeling, a shared experience” (“Towards an Aesthetic” 35), and that “From the fans’ perspective it is obvious that people play the music they do because it ‘sounds good’” (34).

For the musician, such a chimerical vision of individual expression comes at a price. Literary/music critic Jacques Attali referred to the musician as the “sacrificed sacrificer” (30), at once savior and voice of a regimented and stale social existence yet also relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy. This “starving artist” role becomes reified in part through the rhetoric which surrounds musicians. The focus of the present study is to examine such Romantic-based expressionist (or expressivist) rhetoric from the perspective of individuals involved in local Northern Colorado music culture and through the autoethnographic inquiry of the researcher, himself a musician, in order to extend the idea of the “sound-image that composes” to the ways that music composes the musicians themselves.

This goal of this study is to draw out the complexities of music careers as expressed through the rhetoric of eleven interview participants who work in the local Northern Colorado music community, as well as through my experience by using autoethnography, which blurs the line between self and Other by using “self-conscious reflexivity, dialogue, and multiple voices” (Ellis and Bochner 29). My goal is to come closer to understanding how sound and language compose the musician by allowing my own subjectivity and complete membership in the Northern Colorado music community to both color and drive an analysis of the rhetoric of five local musicians, three musician employers, three musician advocates, and a survey of local music fans.

In order to present an autoethnography that has a *commitment to theoretical analysis*, which is one of the crucial elements of autoethnography, according to cultural anthropologist Leon Anderson (378), in the next chapter I offer a broader review of literature in order to place my work firmly within the literature pertaining to the fields of rhetoric and composition studies, sociology, geography, popular music studies, and identity and performance studies. In chapter three I describe the methodology I used to engage in my research of Northern Colorado musicians, and in chapter four I discuss the findings of that research. For the last chapter, I discuss the implications of my research and method, and apply affect theory and community literacy to problems uncovered through my research. It is my hope that this inquiry will advance the theoretical understanding of not only *why*, but also *how* musicians do what they do and how the meaning-making activity of language works to shape and form the local musician experience.

## **Literature Review**

The present study seeks to link music studies to composition studies and to the theories of expressivism and social-epistemicism in particular. One of the primary concerns in the diverse field of rhetoric and composition pertains to how writers make sense of the process of composing within an expanding view of what constitutes a text. Although cognitive rhetoric, which analyzes thinking activities in the writer's brain, has been a generative and valid theory to explain how writers make meaning through the composing process, concepts found along the continuum of expressivism and social-epistemicism are more applicable to a study of the ways that local professional musicians make sense of the work they do, and how those meanings lead to the rhetorical and material positioning of the musician in society. In this study, the worlds of composition and music join in concert through autoethnography, which has allowed me to explore the culture of Northern Colorado music from the liminal space of musician/scholar, a space in which I straddle two identities and whereby the "distinctions between personal and cultural become blurred" (Ellis and Bochner 38). In order to situate expressivism and social-epistemicism within the composition theory landscape, I will now review the most widely-held theories of composition, starting with cognitive rhetoric.

### *Cognitive Theory*

Janet Emig was an early advocate of the cognitive model of process. In 1971, Emig said that composing "does not occur as a left-to-right, solid, uninterrupted activity with an even pace" (57), but instead is a "recursive" (56) activity. The cognitive process was based on theories found in cognitive-developmental psychology (Britton) and is related to Jean Piaget's concept of egocentrism or "the inability to take any perspective

but one's own" (Faigley 657). Andrea Lunsford applied egocentrism to writing processes of basic college writers of the late 1970's, arguing that "their tendency to lapse into personal narrative in writing situations that call for 'abstract' discourse indicates that they are arrested in an 'egocentric stage'" (Faigley 657). In 1980, Linda Flower and John Hayes brought American cognitive psychology to bear on the writing process. They claimed "the process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate and organize during the act of composing" (366).

These processes, according to Flower and Hayes, are imbedded within each other, are hierarchical, and are directed by goals which "embody the writer's developing sense of purpose" (366). However, according to rhetorician Lester Faigley, the "Flower and Hayes' model makes strong theoretical claims in assuming relatively simple cognitive operations produce enormously complex actions" (658). This "scientific" model of the composing process also came under the criticism of pedagogical theorist Henry Giroux in 1983, who argued that the cognitive theory of writing did not account for audience, reducing it to "a variable in an equation" (Faigley 658). But the cognitive process of writing remains a pillar in the field of rhetoric and composition, in part due to the argument that "Writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain" (Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning" 92), and "Writing serves learning uniquely because writing as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies" (89). With the focus on cognition, "truth" and "reality" are found in the outside world, and it is the writer's job to access it through the process of writing.

### *Expressivism*

While cognitive theory explains the writing process in terms of the brain's ability to compute information, expressivism grounds the process in subjectivism. According to writing teacher and theorist Peter Elbow, expressivism is understood as a theory that sees

“the main function of writing as the expression of self” (“Exploring Problems” 14). Expressivism is often seen as an extension of the concept of the Romantic genius; the idea that true art and meaning come from within a writer’s individual nature. This is also a common theme among musicians, the idea that there is a need to create music in order for an individual’s true self to be realized. Expressivist theory in composition studies includes work which treats the writing classroom as an experience which exposes the authority of the “teacher” and focuses on “shocking” students out of adhering to authority, using methods such as playing Ray Charles records in the classroom in an attempt to alter the scene of academic writing (Deemer). Other expressivist research includes that of Donald Murray who, in 1968, claimed that writing is an individual act that requires the writer’s insight, need, and personal voice in order to begin good writing, and that when the writer “finds himself he will find an audience, *because all of us have the same common core*” (Murray 4, emphasis added). A musician, attempting to reach audiences and become successful in the music business, may operate from a similar perspective as the one Murray develops here. An important and generative part of the development of expressivism was free writing (Elbow, MacCrorie), which held that brainstorming and pre-writing lead to the writer’s success. In terms of music, we may see *jamming* (collective or individual musical improvisation) as the equivalent to free-writing. Both pre-writing and jamming are generative activities which lead to ideas that can be formed into a more fully-formed product if so desired by the writer(s) or musician(s).

Expressivism is often linked to Romanticism. Composition theorist Lester Faigley argued that “qualities of Romantic expressivism-integrity, spontaneity, and originality” are essential components to “good writing” (654). Faigley also identified Peter Elbow as one of the leading proponents of expressivism through Elbow’s books *Writing Without Teachers* (1976) and *Writing With Power* (1981), which combined

MacCrorie's free writing ideas with "standards of Romantic theory" and "good writing" found in Coleridge and Wordsworth (Faigley 655). Originality, which was interpreted in composition studies as "the innate potential of the unconscious mind" (Faigley 655), was advocated by education theorist James Moffett as he argued for effective self-expression in writing through self-actualization. With regards to music, integrity and originality are two common driving forces in a musician's personal, artistic, and/or professional choices.

Rhetorician James Berlin devoted much of his academic work to defining the parameters of composition theory. In "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" (1988), Berlin said that an expressionist writer takes into account:

the reality of the material, the social, and the linguistic (as achieving) their true function only when being exploited in the interests of locating the individual's authentic nature. Writing can be seen as paradigmatic of this activity. It is an art, a creative act in which the process-the discovery of the true self-is as important as the product-the self discovered and expressed (674).

Here, Berlin connects expressivism ("an art, a creative act") to an ideological and rhetorical position ("the reality of the material"). Berlin claimed that "expressionistic rhetoric is easily co-opted by the very capitalist forces it opposes" because the "ruling elites in business, industry, and government are those most likely to nod in assent to the ideology inscribed in expressionistic rhetoric" due to the fact that these elites see themselves as products of "the creative realization of the self" (674). In music industry terms, we may conceive of this as a record executive who capitalizes on a musician's individual desire for self expression, a desire which led the musician towards the business of music; a world where originality, integrity, and individualism are valued in the musician's pursuit of her artistic vision. The record executive, in this case, not only supports such an ideology in the musician, but actually depends upon it in order to maintain an economically thriving recording business. A similar case can be found at the



local level of music production. While the record executive needs musicians to pursue their artistic vision of self-expression in order for the industry to continue to have musical product to develop and sell, on a local level the venue owner needs musicians and their desire for self-expression in order for the venue to continue to draw money-spending patrons who seek live music to enjoy.

But, not all actors in society can afford to operate from the principle of self-expression. According to Berlin, the problem with expressivism is that “this vision...represents the interests of a particular class, not all classes” (674). Berlin argued that in order to realize one’s true self, one first needed to be in a privileged social position, allowing one the luxury to pursue such a private vision. All individuals are not afforded the same freedom and opportunity to realize their “true selves” due to the marginalization of different positions of race, class, economic situation, gender, sexual orientation, or age, for example. But expressionistic ideology holds that this is not because of social, cultural, or economic positioning, but due to the individual’s “own unwillingness to pursue a private vision” (674). In short, the expressivist ideology suggests that anyone can realize their true, unique self; all they need is personal exploration, either through writing, music, teaching, or any other activity and/or occupation which seeks out a person’s “unique nature.” In contrast, a more socially aware ideology suggests that these activities, when understood as resulting from the pursuit of a “private vision,” which the expressivist ideology supposedly effectuates, blind individuals to the consideration that “the subject itself is a social construct that emerges through the linguistically-circumscribed interaction of the individual, the community, and the material world” (Berlin 679). The present study looks to seek out such ideologies, both expressivist and social, in the rhetoric of those involved in Northern Colorado music culture.

I have found “music as self-expression” to be a familiar trope in musical circles. But the irony of expressivism is that often, those most constrained by class position continue to support expressionistic ideology due to its “separation of work from authentic human activity” where “self discovery and fulfillment take place away from the job” (677). This separation of work and leisure has a marked material effect on the lives of those who seek to make a living from being a professional musician. On one hand, we may imagine how a life of pursuing a musical dream, a life consisting of late nights and low pay, might result in musicians encountering repeated economic difficulty. On the other hand, it can be argued that such a split of work and leisure may lead to music-minded individuals becoming workers in more consistent, predictable, and mainstream occupations, while desiring the self expression and creative lifestyle that local professional musicians enjoy. If such economically fortunate people act on that desire and begin to enter into the local live music business, we can see how the professional musician can become frustrated, as the market for jobs at which to perform, commonly called *gigs*, thins out from an influx of non-professional musicians, or *musical hobbyists*. This is especially problematic if those individuals agree to play for low or nonexistent wages, thus undercutting the local professional base.

### *Social Theory*

These ideological problems lead us into a consideration of how the continued existence of the “true, authentic self” encounters adversity in society. The theory of social constructionism describes “as social in origin what we normally regard as individual, internal, and mental” (Bruffee 775). Social constructionism holds that knowledge is not individually internal, but a product of social relations (Kuhn, Rorty, Berger and Lukmann, Geertz, Smith). Applied to writing, social constructionism puts forth the idea that writing is a social, historical act that employs language, and the resultant meaning of that language, created from writers’ social relations with the world.

This viewpoint has been advocated by a range of theorists spanning from Kenneth Bruffee, who advocated the collaborative nature of learning, to Shirley Brice Heath, who recognized the substantial influence that family and community have on literacy, to David Bartholomae, who argued that writing in college is often difficult for students because of “the privileged language of the academic community” (Faigley 660).

Further research in social constructionism includes Patricia Bizzell’s work concerning the ways that writers are situated in specific discourse communities, in which they “work together on some project of interaction with the material world” (480). Bizzell acknowledged that, “A writer can belong to more than one discourse community, but her access to the various communities will be unequally conditioned by her social situation” (480). And John Trimbur argues that a writer’s agency can be achieved through “the social interaction of shared activity” in which “individuals realize their own power to take control of their situation by collaborating with others” (Consensus and Difference” 735). What these theorists have in common is the view that writing and knowledge production are not just cognitive functions in which the brain computes information found in the world; nor an individual discovery of a true self, but a result of the interaction between an individual and the world, a transaction of ideas taking place among people, their communities and society in general. In addition, the theory of social constructivism, developed from the psychological theory of development advanced by Lee Vygotsky, focuses on the individual and her learning process as a result of the social construction of knowledge and meaning.

#### *James Berlin’s Social Focus*

Berlin suggested an epistemology from social constructionism and social constructivism. For Berlin, a focus on social-epistemic rhetoric “attempts to place the question of ideology at the center of the teaching of writing (682). Berlin says that social-epistemic rhetoric, “offers both a detailed analysis of dehumanizing social

experience and a self-critical and overtly historicized alternative based on democratic practices in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres” (682). This analysis is carried out by acknowledging the way that rhetoric, or “the ways discourse is generated,” determines how the language we use is both material and social, and plays a role in producing culture (Berlin 678). Connected to this is a postmodern understanding of the self, which says that there is no transcendent “subject,” or Platonic essence of a person’s “self,” but that individuals are products of economic, social, political, and cultural conditions through the activity of an historical discourse, the “ideological formulations inscribed in the language-mediated practical activity of a particular time and place” (679). This discourse acknowledges social influence and renounces “arguments based on the permanent rational structures of the universe or on the evidence of the deepest and most profound personal institutions” (679). Through social-epistemic rhetoric, we are cognizant of “the ideological practices at work in the lives of our students and ourselves” (682). Put simply, the social-epistemic is a way of using language, or any symbolic sign system, which acknowledges the influence that ideology and society have on what we say and how we say it.

Music, operating as a sign system, can also be used as part of the musician’s social positioning. Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure saw *signs* as “the building blocks we use to communicate our thoughts” (Bouissac 90). Saussure understood *langue* as “a kind of social contract, the general grammar and lexicon that particular speakers must use to communicate successfully” which “makes possible and gives meaning to utterances” (Bizzell and Herzberg 1189). The utterances, or *parole*, are signs which contain no inherent meaning. These signs are a combination of the *signifier* and the *signified*. The signifier relates to the word used to represent the signified, which is a psychological “image” of the concept which the signifier refers to. Signs only “signify through their differences with each other,” and “meaningful units do not necessarily

coincide with words” (91), said Bouissac. Meaning can be attached to non-linguistic entities as well as words. Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin extended Saussure’s theory by arguing that signs do not require psychological processing to be given meaning, but instead need “intention, interpretation, social context, and historical circumstance” (Bizzell and Herzberg 1192) to function as dialogue. This dialogue is how signs generate meaning. With Bakhtin in mind, we can see how Saussure’s concepts of the sign opens up the possibility for musical units (notes, scales, chords, melodies, overtures, songs, and recordings, for example) to be understood as signifiers. But musical signifiers, like language, do have ideological formulations which work through them; however, the actual signifiers in music are ambiguous, and are more difficult to locate and define than in alphabetic language.

#### *The Expressivist/Social-Epistemic Continuum*

While the cognitive theory and its practical applications have always remained in consideration among composition theorists and teachers, it was expressivist and social-epistemic rhetoric which really took hold in the field of rhetoric and composition. Subsequent to the rise of postmodernism in English departments, these dichotomous rhetorical theories produced controversy (France, Crick) and spawned arguments against social constructionism (Jones, Kent) and in favor of it (Schiappa), while scholars such as Trimbur attempted to expose expressivism’s shortcomings, claiming that if expressivist pedagogies “seek to liberate the individual, they also simultaneously constitute the student as a social atom, an accounting unit under the teacher’s gaze” (735). Kathleen O’Brien espoused the benefits of expressivism, “the current composition movement that most closely resembles Romantic theory” (80), arguing that it “can teach us important lessons in ethos and audience” (81) in that “students can learn to be more effective writers by asking their audience to empathize with them and vice versa” (86).

Sherrie Gradin joined expressivism with social-epistemicism in *social expressivism*, which entails understanding how individuals “act on the environment and (how) their environment acts on them” (Hawk 89). Similarly, Stephen M. Fishman and Lucille Parkinson McCarthy argued for attention to expressivism as it relates to social constructionism. Further, Fishman and McCarthy attempted to rescue expressivism from the Romantic reading. The thesis of Fishman and McCarthy is similar to Gradin’s in their agreement that expressivism and social-epistemicism do not have to be mutually exclusive, and that both theories have a place in the classroom, as well as musical settings. Fishman and McCarthy also explained how Romantic poets “reacted against the professionalization and commoditization of writing that forced writers to cater to audiences, (although) this isolation was not an elevation of the isolated individual” (Hawk 88). We can see similar ideologies emerging in local professional musicians’ struggles against the music business as they seek a “transformational discourse” in order to impress upon “the individual’s relationship to the social” (Hawk 89).

Rhetoric and composition departments embrace social theory in part because it comes equipped with a facility of empowerment for the marginalized groups of society (Cushman) by offering “both a detailed analysis of dehumanizing social experience and a self-critical and overtly historicized alternative based on democratic practices in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres” (Berlin 682). With this in mind, I have extended social composition theory and its continuous relationship to expressivism into the realm of music studies and the study of local professional musicians in particular. In addition to composition studies, I embarked upon this endeavor through inquiries into the sociology of music, the rhetoric of music, the geography of music, popular music studies, and identity/communication studies. These areas are of critical importance to understanding how local professional musicians rhetorically situate themselves within,

and are situated by, local music communities; as well as the impact that the larger industry has on local music discourse.

### *The Sociology of Music*

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, German sociologist Max Weber argued that music represented a “deeply meaningful part of a society’s culture” (Turley 635). Weber looked at sociological aspects of music through a materialist and historiographical lens, and argued that “deep rooted structures, unknown to the human actors, were shaping historical events” (Turley 634). He believed this to be a result of the Roman Catholic Church’s rationalization of musical notation and instruments, a teleological process that “brought on the development of capitalism in the West” (Turley 645). Weber believed that “cultural objects, like music, need to be examined as social products” (Turley 637), an endeavor which cultural sociologist Howard S. Becker later undertook. Becker found that the emergence of art works “involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people” (1), which he referred to as *art worlds*. Artists work “in the center of a large network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome” (769). Artistic conventions, such as genre, aid in this cooperation, but they simultaneously hinder innovation as well (767). On a local level of music production, an art world consists of working musicians, club owners, DJs, friends, family, and studio engineers, for example, although the music industry at large still exerts its influence on local cultural activity.

Musicological sociologists Richard Peterson and N. Anand’s Production of Culture perspective regards the ways in which culture is understood as “expressive symbols” (311), produced in concert with changes in technology, law, industry, organizational structure, careers, and market. These symbols “are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved” (311). Two important “regularities” (318) come out of this. First, Peterson and Anand explained that

a “major change in one of the facets can start a cycle of destabilization and reorganization in the entire production nexus” which causes “cultural fields to trend toward one of three states: (a) oligopolistic and stable, producing unimaginative cultural fare; (b) turbulent and competitive, nurturing cultural innovation; or a (c) competitiveness managed by oligopolistic control fostering diversity without innovation” (318). Second, while production is influential on culture, other factors, such as individual creativity and social conditions, contribute to the creation and dissemination of cultural products and expressive symbols (318).

Much sociological work on music production developed out of “Art Worlds” and “Production of Culture” perspectives of the late 1970’s. These perspectives “showed a willingness to bring insights from non-musical theories and apply them to musical production” (Dowd 235). In “Production Perspectives in the Sociology of Music” (2004), musicological sociologist Timothy Dowd outlined important recent work on music production which showed, as Howard Becker described, “the utility of studying music as the result of the collective activity of people involved in the musical process” (235). Here, Dowd defined *music production* as “the creation, performance, and dissemination of music” (Dowd 236), the demarcation I apply to the present research.

A crucial aspect of the sociology of music production is genre. Cultural sociologists Richard Peterson and Jennifer Lena examined how different musical genres emerge as a part of “recurrent processes of development and change across musics” (697) and the ways in which genre “organizes the production and consumption of cultural material” (698). Peterson and Lena understood genre as a mode of symbolic classification, and they described the ways in which these classifications are made in relation to each other according to field opportunity and institutional dynamics. They described four distinct types of genre: *avant-garde*, which grows from tight-knit creative circles; *scene-based*, a collection of “spatially-situated artists, fans, record companies,



and supporting small business people (703); *industry-based*, meaning genres which are organized around a corporation; and *traditionalist*, or genres which “preserve a genre’s musical heritage” (706). Peterson and Lena suggest that most genres start out as avant-garde, grow into scene-based genres, and these scene-base genres eventually become subsumed by the larger industry. Once a genre has become industry-based, it can develop as a traditionalist genre. While Peterson and Lena find that not all genres follow the same trajectory from avant-garde through traditional, it is important to note that the genres (Rock-n-Roll, Folk-Rock, Punk-Rock, Psychedelic Rock, Alternative Country, Folk, and Urban Blues) which appear in the present study do follow this trajectory. This is worth noting as we consider the effect that the larger music industry has on local music scenes and the rhetorical positioning and artistic and career choices of the musicians in those scenes.

While not specifically exploring genre or scenes, Hugo DeJager applied a somewhat traditional sociological perspective to the ways that “people behave towards one another when they produce, reproduce and listen to those sounds which they perceive as ‘music’” (161). DeJager examined music through the norms, values, and attitudes that accompany it, and through social class and non-musical beliefs, such as religion, work, and leisure. DeJager was not interested in “people as unique individuals...endowed with certain inborn capacities as psychologists are and probably musicians as well” (162); instead, DeJager was concerned with inter-individual behavior. DeJager argued for a conception of music as identification, an external act where individuals must acquire a certain “musical frame of reference” (163) which allows them to appreciate and react to music in a certain way. The internal side of music, DeJager explained, regards musical structure and development, while the external side has to do with “that which sociologically makes sounds into ‘music’; the collectively held convictions, ideas, beliefs, conceptions, values, and norms” (164) which collect around “musical” sounds.

DeJager also considered music and its relation to social class. He suggested that some types of music, such as the classical forms of Mozart and Beethoven, which place strong emphasis on individualism, postponement of “present gratification,” and which require time and money, can be linked to higher social classes. DeJager ended the article with this assessment:

As I see it, musicians should become a little less music-centered, as were most of the musicians I have met, and become a little more people-oriented. I hope it does not sound too pretentious when I say that it might help to make them more realistic musicians in their society (167).

Tia DeNora approached DeJager’s “people-oriented” perspective by focusing on how we make sense of the ways that music functions. DeNora asked “does music have extra-musical significance and can it therefore be conceived of as a language?” (84). But she quickly moved beyond the timeworn question of “what music means” to the more sociological question of “how musical meaning is possible.” DeNora identified Deryck Cooke as one musicologist who has claimed that music has an “expressive framework” (85) in which emotion and meaning are found in musical intervals. DeNora disagreed, saying that “the meaning of objects, utterances and acts is neither inherent nor invariant but socially constructed” (85). Hence, while music is perceived as expressive, efforts to predicate its meaning in the music itself remain elusive. We can see how music eludes such comprehension when we consider Saussure’s definition of music as a “system of signifiers without signifieds” (87) and Viennese music critic Edward Hanslick’s claim that “sound in speech is but a sign...sound in music is the end” (87). Put simply, music in and of itself does not mean anything. While this is highly contestable, it leaves us to wonder exactly *where* musical meaning comes from.

DeNora concluded that music cannot be classified as a language, but the two can be compared in practical contexts in which they create meaning *in use*. In this case, both

language and music can be perceived as containing intrinsic meaning although in neither case is there an “explicit link between form and function” (88). Musical meaning, claims DeNora, requires work on the part of the listener, critic, performer, and social structure in general. This work starts with believing that the object in question is significant and worth contemplating, and is further aided by “subliminal or pedagogic” (93) contextualization cues such as scene, familiarity, and rhythmic and harmonic variations, for example. DeNora further suggested that the way to control the “work” involved in the creation of music meaning is to control its rhetoric. Because music has the power to persuade, DeNora says, we cannot separate it from the political.

### *The Rhetoric of Music*

Rhetoric, according to philosopher Newton Garver, is “not a matter of pure form but has to do with the relation of language to the world (to life) through the relation of linguistic expressions to the specific circumstances in which their use makes sense” (Bizzell and Herzberg). I am extending this idea to include not only linguistic, but musical, expressions as well, in order to make sense of these expressions in the “specific circumstances” of the working musician. In Irving J. Rein’s essay, *The Rhetoric of the Popular Arts* (1972), music is seen as a persuasive form. Rein has said that rhetoric works in music differently than other forms of persuasion because the listener “anticipates no persuasiveness as such” (73), especially within the relative simplicity of popular music and the repetition that simplicity encourages. Rein saw the persuasive power of music in the form of the performance of a song. Because of the subversive rhetorical workings of music, Rein claimed that musicians “remain highly articulate antagonists of twentieth-century bias and bigotry” (79).

Deanna and Timothy Sellnow focused more on the structural aspects of musical rhetoric in introducing the *illusion of life* rhetorical perspective, which attempts to understand “how discursive linguistic symbols and non-discursive aesthetic symbols

function together to communicate and persuade” (395) in didactic (instructional, informative, pleasurable, and entertaining) music. For the purposes of the present context, we may understand didactic music as popular song. In this perspective, the *structure* of a song creates an illusion of life through “the dynamic interaction between virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music)” (399).

This illusion of life is explored in aesthetic philosopher Susanne Langer’s theory of aesthetic symbolism, which identified symbols as necessary in order for humans “to comprehend various aspects of life” (Sellnow and Sellnow 397). Langer argued that music is a “highly articulated symbol that ‘can express the forms of vital experience which language is particularly unfit to convey’” (as quoted in Sellnow and Sellnow 397). Music, as a symbol, “serves as an expression of the intensity-release rhythm of human living,” and “the human life of feeling is based on a continuous intensity-release process” (397). Through music, the Sellnows argued, emotion is symbolized through “rhythmic patterns of intensity and release” (398) in a similar way that paralinguistic cues relate emotion when accompanied by oral discourse.

While lyrics represent virtual experience (as opposed to actual experience), music for the Sellnows represents virtual time, which “‘makes time audible and its form and continuity sensible’” (402). Music “suspends ordinary time and offers itself as an ideal substitute and equivalent” (402). Tension and release patterns do not just occur in time but also in harmonic structure, melodic structure, phrasing, and instrumentation. The authors explored the interaction between lyrics and music, describing *congruity* as a feature of a song that has words that match the tension or release patterns in the music, and *incongruity* as a rhetorical device in which the lyrics do not match the tension and release patterns in the song’s harmony, melody, and rhythm.

Concerning instrumental music, the Sellnows can only attribute virtual experience to “a common worldview or ideology espoused by the listeners” (411). This

supports Saussure's argument that music lacks any signifieds other than those listeners attach to it through language. The Sellnows also stated the importance of context, in that "intensity and release patterns depicted in musical elements must be understood as relative rather than absolute" (402). While different listeners may focus on different tension and release patterns, and thus derive different "emotional interpretations of a particular musical work," the Sellnows submit that these interpretations are only *expressive* "and not concerned with the ways in which music might function rhetorically" (398). This distinction can be applied to the present study in that local professional musicians, while operating within an *expressive* art form, position themselves and their music rhetorically.

#### *The Geography of Music*

This study looks specifically at the local music scene of Northern Colorado, yet any local scene is always influenced by the global music industry. In order to better understand that relationship a conceptualization of the place of music is helpful. Places, according to human geographer Ray Hudson, are "complex entities, ensembles of material objects, people, and systems of social relationships embodying distinct cultures and multiple meanings, identities, and practices" ("Regions and Place" 627). Hudson described the ways in which places are identified with music and how those places can work with and for that particular music. Places are perceived by the sounds one hears in them, Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill argued, and in order to understand the place of music "is not to reduce music to its location, to ground it down into some geographical baseline, but to allow a purchase on the rich aesthetic, cultural, economic, and political geographies of musical language" ("The Place of Music" 425). The place of music is integral to understanding local music scenes and the way the wider industry influences their formation.

### *Popular Music Studies*

In the 1998 book *Performing Rites*, musicologist Simon Frith examined the state of popular music in the mid 90's. He looked at issues of musician identity, performativity, music as rhetoric, and musical meaning, and how these factors influence the experiences of musicians, listeners (consumers), and the industry. Frith's focus on popular music illustrates the idea that musicians in both local and industry-based scenes both function performatively and rhetorically. Another factor that affects the local musician situation is genre and the larger industry's need for maintaining genre categories. Musical sociologist Jennifer Lena examined the rap music of artists such as Grandmaster Flash, N.W.A. and P. Diddy to find that "artists' reactions to the market effects musical content" (480), a discovery which I hope to relate to local musicians and the ways that larger industry forces affect what music musicians play in public performance. Post-punk, a genre of music which sounded like a more experimental and complex version of the punk of the early 70's, and represented by artists such as Joy Division, Talking Heads, and Television, is the basis for David Hesmondhalgh's study of independently (non-corporate) produced music. This piece follows the life of an independent record label.

Independent labels rose from specialized mom and pop record stores but were soon subsumed into the larger music industry, an example of which is the punk and post punk music of Great Britain. Local independents are also part of Northern Colorado's music scenes, and they represent a crucial link between the local and larger industry. Cultural sociologist Ryan Moore also looked at punk and the genre/subculture's "do it yourself" (DIY) ethos as an act of dissent "in the act of producing music and media that are relatively autonomous from the corporate culture industry" (438). In an age when digital technology has made industry involvement in music distribution unnecessary, independent labels have significantly altered the industry, often to the advantage of the

musician. Now, a small label, as well as a musician her/himself, can distribute a musician's work globally with limited funds. Several Northern Colorado musicians have their own small independent labels, bringing the local to the global faster than ever before.

Sociologist John Blackling said that the goal of folk music is to create art intended for a wide reception. He argued that performance "does not require a special set of capabilities, and active listening is essentially a mental rehearsal of performance, in which a person re-invents 'the text'" (10), and musical codes "are derived neither from some universal emotional language nor from stages in the evolution of a musical art: they are socially accepted patterns of sound that have been invented and developed by interacting individuals in the context of different social and cultural systems" (10). The folk aesthetic is very much alive in Northern Colorado, and Blackling's piece is of interest in the present study because he approaches the work that an audience does in a performance situation. According to Blackling, for musicians to understand the audience's work allows them to negotiate live performances more critically. Other articles look at the benefits of researching music ethnographically (Cohen) and the way "rock covers" or copy versions of popular songs played at local music events are an elemental part of rock n roll (Solis). Most of my interview subjects are concerned with the original/copy song material duality, which is but one of the many factors which influences musician identities.

#### *Communication Studies/Identity*

Theodore Gracyk's book *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* presents a view of popular music as mass art instead of a mode of popular culture in order to see how meaning in popular music is never specific. Gracyk argued that music is a key factor in influencing identity construction. David Hargraves, Dorothy Miell, and Raymond McDonald looked at musical identities from a psychological viewpoint, and

Colwyn Trevarthen offered the viewpoint that musical identity starts at infancy. Susan O'Neill extended the psychological review of identity to young musicians, and Jane Davidson analyzed the identity of solo performers. Julie Nagel researched family and academic expectations in the construction of musical identity as it relates to music careers, and Susan Hallam and Jackie Shaw argued that musical proficiency is related to social integration more so than formal learning or innate talent. These authors describe the way that music, as a social activity, constructs how musicians view themselves, and how that social construction is based in cognitive psychology. An awareness of this psychological aspect of music performance and career allowed me to come to understand how the musical work I do and my human development and relation to others greatly influence the way I see myself, my music, and the role of the local professional musician.

*Studies Concerning the Specific Experience of Performing Musicians*

Howard S. Becker analyzed the job of dance musicians, their interactions with audience, and the conflict and isolation that come with being the type of musician that performs at dances, parties, and weddings. This early seminal work will inform my thesis as it pertains to the emotional work that musicians do and how the audience affects the musician's work. Ruth Finnegan conducted ethnographic research of musicians in a small English town and found that musicians of all genres and styles use music to strengthen social bonds. Robert Stebbins analyzed amateur musicians and found that leisure participation in music strengthens social bonds. This directed focus on music as a popular art form steeped in social interaction is important in understanding the ways that the separation of work and leisure helps determine economic and social conditions for local professional musicians.

Musical geographers Andrew McGregor and Chris Gibson examined the work of DJs in a small college town in Australia and analyzed the ways that musical work for DJs is constrained by a number of forces related to audience demands, availability of venues,



and the ever-shifting geography of urban spaces. Cultural sociologists Stephen B. Groce and John A. Dowell examined the group structure of two local bands, focusing on how the bands' goals were or were not reached in terms of economic and creative efforts. Musicologist Kenneth Mullen argued that there exist two rhetorics pertaining to "public house performers" (17), musicians who performed in the pubs of Aberdeen, Scotland. The rhetoric of the "musical artist" (26) suggested self-orientation, musical skills, and original material, while the rhetoric of the "musical entertainer" (26) suggested a focus on the audience.

Two studies which are closely related to this thesis are cultural sociologist H. Stith Bennett's 1981 ethnographic chronicle of Northern Colorado musicians called *On Becoming a Rock Musician* and a 1989 article by Stephen B. Groce titled "Occupational Rhetoric and Ideology: A Comparison of Copy and Original Music Performers." In Bennett's book, the author used participant observation by joining Northern Colorado rock bands for the express purpose of studying them. Bennett's research resulted in a kind of how-to manual for being in a band, complete with accounts of the camaraderie, interpersonal difficulty, music performance work situations, and recording situations. What is of interest to me, however, is the fact that I am conducting a similar (auto) ethnographic study in the same region thirty years after Bennett. While Bennett does interview his subjects, he does not do the type of rhetorical analysis I am doing here, a similar type to that which was performed by Groce.

Although Groce applies Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's theory of ideology to the rhetoric of performing musicians in "Green River, a small city in the south central region of the United States" (393), he does not use ideology in the way it is used in composition studies, with its emphasis on rhetorical context. Instead, Groce sought out the "nature of the ideological dimension of local level bands and musicians" (392), and finding that this "nature" resulted in ideologies of the "artist," or "original"

music performer, and those of the “entertainer,” or “copy” music performer. Although Groce offered that “The artist-entertainer dichotomy is more a product of differences in larger and more complex ideological positions which are themselves responses to the social organization of the music industry” (405), his work lacks specific conceptions of, and terminology for, the “complex ideological positions” which expressivism and social-epistemicism afford me in this thesis.

## **Methodology**

In this chapter, I describe the particulars of my project, which was designed to collect information about the local Northern Colorado music scene and the professional musicians working within it. I will describe my interview informants, how I chose them, and how I collected and analyzed my data. I will then offer an explanation of the autoethnographic method I used, the delimitations and limitations of my method, and the significance of the study.

### *Setting and Purpose*

This study took place at several different music related locations along Northern Colorado's Front Range as part of an inquiry into the ways that musicians, musician employers (venue owners and booking agents), and music fans perceive the occupational role of the local professional musician. Including the metropolis of Denver, and the affluent college towns of Boulder and Ft. Collins, the Front Range of Northern Colorado, presents a substantial, yet manageable area from which to gather data. Many styles and genres of music are performed in Northern Colorado and it contains musicians of many skill levels, ages, races, and gender who create and perform on multiple levels of professionalization. In many ways, this study is an update of Bennett's 1981 book about Northern Colorado musicians, *On Becoming a Rock Musician*.

The purpose of this study is to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the ways that musicians are rhetorically positioned in a regional setting in order to provide an initial description of professional music practice. The musicians' rhetorical positioning is dynamic. It involves the musicians' employers' perception of the musician, musician advocates' discernment of the musician situation, the music fan's perceptions, and the musicians' own understanding of themselves and their fellow musicians.

Following from a rhetorical analysis of the ways that musicians position themselves in society, this study will investigate ways in which musicians can work to create better

economic and occupational conditions for themselves in a society which commonly devalues the work of the professional musician, and in the arts more generally.

Although studies about musicians have been conducted in the past, there is a dearth of systematic study describing musicians' or artists' professional lives employing the useful ideological framework of composition studies, especially the rhetorical context as it applies to expressivist and social-epistemic theories of rhetoric and ideology. Just as these theories attempt to explain how writers rhetorically position themselves in their writing, I will use expressivism and social-epistemicism to complicate the ways musicians rhetorically position themselves in, and are rhetorically constructed by, society. My research has been guided by these questions:

- How can working musicians rhetorically position themselves in the music business in order to take control of their careers?
- How can understanding of the ways that the “musician” has been discursively constructed help to enable working musicians in their quest for artistic and economic mobility?
- How does the musician’s performance of his or her identity accept or resist cultural categories?
- What does a music community, informed by community literacy practices, look like, and how can a Freirean dialogue about the environments of local music production empower a community of working musicians?
- How does affect, feeling, and emotion influence musicians’ rhetorical and material positioning in society, and how can musician-based community literacy empower local musicians within and among these affective contexts?

### *Informant Selection and Participant Descriptions*

This study relies on data collected from the interviews of working musicians, music venue employers, musician advocacy group members, and surveys of music fans.

#### *Local Professional Musicians*

Rhetorician Ellen Cushman said that “Given the role rhetoricians have historically played in the politics of their communities, I believe modern rhetoric and composition scholars can be agents of change outside the university” (7). This study is intended to take up Cushman’s call with respect to the local professional musician community. In order to be informative and educational to members of this community, I avoid focusing on only one genre of music. I am following the lead of Ruth Finnegan, whose 1989 ethnography of musicians called *The Hidden Musicians*, challenged “the usual distinctions of high and low culture (by) asking the same questions of all musics and all musicians” (Cohen 128). Also, an analysis of only “cover band” performers or “original” performers might overlook some important distinctions in how musicians’ perceived expressivity impacts their rhetorical positioning, so both of those groups of musicians are included in this study. At any rate, the boundary between these two categories of musicians is often significantly blurred.

Musician interview participants were found through word of mouth, using my membership in the musician community to locate these individuals and groups. While this approach, for the most part, limited me to musicians of a certain stylistic and genre definition with whom I had familiarity, I consciously tried to find musicians with whom I was unfamiliar with in order to maintain a more representative musician sample. I also attempted to compensate for this limitation by using my participation in my academic community in order to find interview subjects with whom I might otherwise not be familiar with. Musicians of any genre were considered as long as they met the following criteria:

- performed at music venues for compensation
- used that compensation for at least part of their living wage
- released recordings of their music

I interviewed five Northern Colorado musicians. **Mac** is a Ft. Collins bassist in a popular touring rock/rhythm and blues band which performs much original music along with a few “covers,” or versions of other artists’ musical material. Mac is also starting his own production company to use the experience he has gained from being a working musician in order to help younger musicians tour, record, compose, and market their music. **Keith** is a Ft. Collins singer/songwriter who has toured internationally, has recorded several albums worth of original material, and now primarily performs that material locally. **Basil** is a Ft. Collins indie rock musician and producer who has become adept at using the internet to promote and market his music. **John** is a Boulder jam rock guitarist, vocalist, and bandleader who performs regularly around Northern Colorado with his band, which, in keeping with their young audience, incorporates new electronic styles of music into their rock sound. Finally, **Kate** is a Denver blues guitarist, vocalist, and bandleader who has become skilled at maintaining a hectic schedule of gigs around the Northern Colorado area.

#### *Musician Employers*

I sent emails and visited venues in order to locate the venue owner interview subjects, and I chose two venue owners and one booking agent (who is also a musician) to interview. I identified musician employers as those who contribute to the local music scene and the musicians within it by offering a place for a mutual business partnership opportunity between musicians and owners. **Del** is a Denver jazz club owner whose club offers live music seven night a week, with one night a week devote to a “jam” open to musicians of all skill levels. **Bill** is the owner of a reputable Ft. Collins music institution, and runs a well-managed operation which contributes to the local community by

offering a quality venue for musicians and fans, and **Neil** is a folk rock singer/songwriter who also books musical acts at two Boulder venues.

#### *Musician Advocates*

I used my position in the local music business to identify people involved in musician advocacy groups. I located:

- volunteers who work with local musician advocacy groups to educate local musicians about the music business
- paid members of musician union organizations
- individuals who are familiar with the musicians, venues, producers, and other people and entities involved in the local music business

I interviewed three musician advocates. **Reuben** is the Denver based president of the local musicians union, **Lita** is the president of the statewide musician organization, and **Esther** is a Ft. Collins musician and also a founder of the local musician association, of which she is president.

#### *Music Fans*

To identify music fans to survey, I attempted to locate individuals who classify themselves as fans of live local music in both performance and recorded forms. I requested that only those individuals who identified themselves as “music fans” complete my survey, which can be found in Appendix E. “Music fan” was defined as an individual who attends at least four local music events a month. I was aided by family members and friends, who sent out the web link to my online survey to Northern Colorado individuals in their contact lists. In addition, I had acquaintances of mine who were more familiar with the local music scene than I send out the web link via facebook. One hundred and

twenty survey request emails were sent out and sixty-one completed surveys were collected, for a 50% return rate.

### *Data Collection*

My data were collected through open ended interviews which lasted not more than 40 minutes, and a survey distributed through surveymonkey.com. I generated data which: a) identified common ideologies about music, music performance, and local professional musicians which can be labeled as “expressivist” b) common ideologies about music, music performance, and local professional musicians which can be labeled as “socially epistemic” c) common ideologies that combine “expressivism” and “social-epistemicism” d) ways that these ideologies impact the artistic and economic destinies of local professional musicians, and e) ways that musicians are able to effectively work among these contrasting ideologies. Informants selected aliases which are used throughout this discussion, and all informants signed a consent form (see Appendix A) to authorize my use of their words.

To identify the ideologies of the musicians I interviewed, I asked them what it means to them to be a musician, and if they thought of playing music as a job, a way to express themselves, or both. Sociologist Stephen B. Groce has argued that ideology, “as a ‘world view’ is not given as some component of people’s personalities, but rather is made, forged in the day-to-day interactions in which people participate, wherein they ‘defer to, manage, reject, or apply a symbolic framework to the objects which make up their environment’” (394). Through examining the ways that musicians talk about their music, careers, and musical contexts, I was able to come closer to locating the ideologies they operate from and within. I was also interested in what musicians thought about giving away their musical services for free, and how non-payment for musical work impacts the musicians themselves and the local musician community. This allowed me to



see how different ideologies practically impact the particular working conditions of participants in the local music business.

In addition to asking musicians questions pertaining to why they play music--for a job or for self-expression--I also inquired about how they approach music, as a career or hobby. Although many musicians refer to themselves as “professional,” there are still varying levels of dedication to music as a career. I asked musicians how they ensure that others take their music seriously. I also felt that it was important to inquire about the musicians’ interactions with venue owners and musicians advocacy groups in order to come to a fuller understanding of how well the musician feels his or her work is being valued by others in the local music business. I asked venue owners what the role of a venue should be as part of a local music community. With musician advocates, I asked how they empower local professional musicians and how they bring the local music community together. Please see Appendices 2-4 for lists of all of my interview questions.

In addition to locating ideologies I find in members of the local music community, I included information about my own experience as a local musician. I conducted autoethnographic research in order to do this. An autoethnography is similar to ethnography, a social science method of research which entails conducting extensive fieldwork in order to study cultures that are not fully understood and lie outside of the mainstream. However, autoethnography contains an autobiographical element which uses information from the researcher’s own experience in order to pursue a more complete account of a particular culture. In autoethnography, the researcher is a full member of the population being studied and is often as much subject as researcher. The work of the autoethnographer is often undertaken to shed light on a culture that is only known in certain limited ways. The autoethnographer challenges these understandings and offers resistance based on an insider’s perspective. Cultural anthropologist Leon Anderson has identified five essential components of autoethnographic inquiry.

*Complete member researcher status (CMR)* means that the autoethnographer is a “complete member in the social world under study” (Anderson 379). Convert CMRs “become converted to complete immersion and membership during the course of the research” (Anderson 379), but in my research, I am what Anderson calls an Opportunistic CMR, meaning that I have “acquired intimate familiarity through occupational, recreational, or lifestyle participation” (379). *Analytic reflexivity* “involves an awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants” (Anderson 382). Being analytically reflexive throughout my work, I maintain a focus on the ways in which I myself am part of the story I am telling. I can offer no “eye in the sky” perspective, only my “perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others” (Anderson 382).

*Narrative visibility of the researcher’s self* is “enhanced textual visibility of the researcher’s self” (Anderson 384), and it means that my own experience and feelings are part of the story and considered “vital data” (384) in order to understand the social world of local musicians. *Dialogue with informants beyond the self* is how the autoethnographer avoids “self-absorption” (Anderson 385). This type of dialogue is recorded in this thesis through my interviews and survey, and it ensures that my autoethnography is grounded in my own experience, but “reaches beyond it as well” (Anderson 386). The last component of autoethnography, according to Anderson, is *commitment to theoretical analysis* (378). This means that I am not only “truthfully rendering the social world under investigation, but also transcending that world through broader generalization” (Anderson 388). The way I use commitment to theoretical analysis in this thesis is by using interview data to guide me to broader analytic inquiry, using literature in the diverse fields I outlined in the last chapter.

Working as an autoethnographer, I became an active participant/subject allowing my subjectivity to explicitly both color and drive my accounts of the phenomena under

question, particularly for the purpose of challenging the status quo or challenging both the larger culture of professional musicians and my fellow musicians to action that will benefit themselves and their fellow musicians as workers in a complex profit-driven industry known as the music industry. To do this, I situated information from personal reflection, academic research, and reaction to interview data within my study of the culture of local professional musicians in Northern Colorado. I used “self-conscious reflexivity, dialogue, and multiple voices” (Ellis and Bochner 29) in order to draw out the complexities of a music career as I investigated the interactions between self and Other.

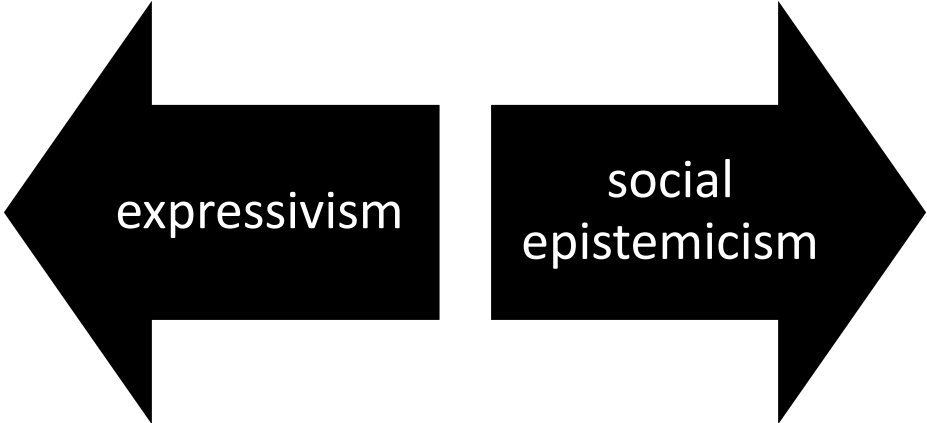
#### *Data Analysis*

I used an analytic approach drawn from grounded theory and characterized as “constant comparative analysis” in order to code my interview data. This analysis involved open, axial, and third level coding, which involves segmenting the language into small units and then reconstituting it into “categories, themes, and patterns” in order to thematically analyze the interviews qualitatively. In total, 1612 total response points were gathered from interview data for quantitative analysis. To be considered a response point, a unit of data had to be relevant to the study according to the researcher’s subjective perspective. The response points were collected and coded according to patterns.

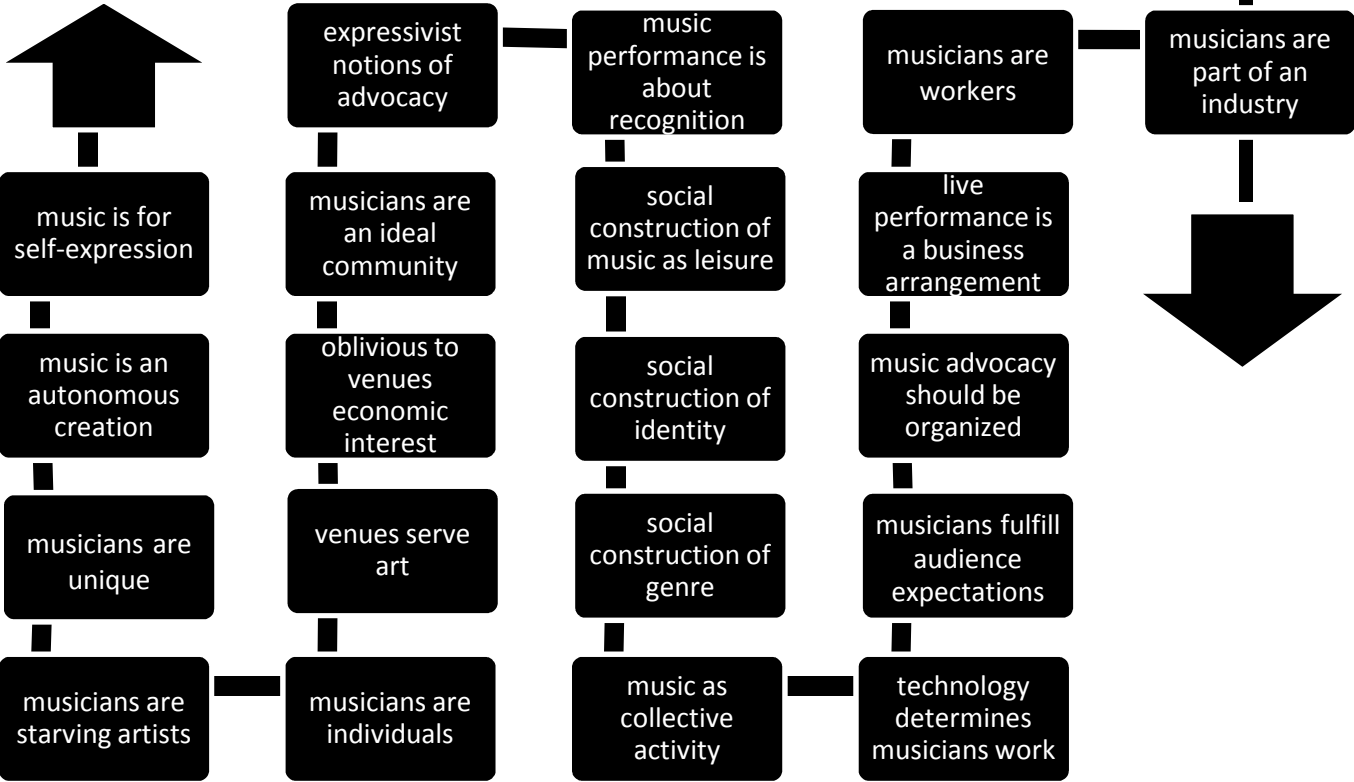
Pattern coding was applied to a theoretical continuum which ranged from expressivism to an awareness of the socially constructed nature of local music production (see fig. 1). These categories were then condensed into twenty-one themes based on the same theoretical model (see fig. 2). While no one theme was able to unproblematically account for the entire range of the participants’ experiences, some did come closer than others to providing tangible concepts to “conceptualize, describe, and explain the experiences” (Silverman, as quoted by DiRamio et al, 80) of the interview participants. These twenty one themes were divided into the following divisions; high expressivism,

low expressivism, low levels of awareness of the socially constructed nature of local music production, and high levels of the awareness of the socially constructed nature of local music production (see table 1). This was done in order to have specific percentages which could be referred to in later discussion of the data.

(Fig. 1)



(Fig. 2)



### *More on Autoethnography*

In 1991, Mary Louise Pratt included autoethnography as one of “the literate arts of the contact zone” (38). In her reconsideration of notions of community, Pratt envisioned *contact zones*, or “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (33). Pratt relates the story of Guaman Poma, who, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century created a revised account of the Spanish conquest of the Incas. Poma approximated the discourse of the Spanish in order to describe the Incas in ways that engage with the representations of the Incas constructed by the Spanish. Using *transculturation*, Poma represented his subordinated and dominated culture by selecting from and inventing with Spanish terms and Spanish representations of Incas (34). Inspired by Poma, Pratt used the term *autoethnographic* to describe texts which “so-defined others construct *in response to* or in dialogue with” (34) dominant texts. In the present study, I used autoethnography to interrogate contact zones between musicians, those in dominant positions of power in the music business, the academy, and my own subjectivity as a musician/scholar.

*The Ethnographic I*, by Carolyn Ellis, examines the contact zone between disciplinary structure and the subjectivity of the writer. Ellis’ book was written in the form of a novel which tells a story explaining the methodology behind autoethnography, of which Ellis argues for an evocative form. Ellis’ insistence on narration and performativity helped me balance my inquiry between Anderson’s analytic, disciplinary style and more evocative forms. Mark Neumann discussed ways to deal with the “crisis of representation,” which a postmodern view of ethnography leads qualitative researchers toward, and how the “shifting gaze of cultural observation” (“Collecting Ourselves” 172) leads us away from the Other and towards ourselves. Autoethnography allows us to respond to “dominant cultural narratives that often shadow the experiences of those who live under them” (190). Neumann has said that borders are not exterior, but within us. I

adapted Neumann's philosophy to the present research as I "contested meanings of self and culture that accompany the exercise of representational authority" (191) with respect to local music production.

Also informing my methodology was Sarah Wall, who conducted an autoethnographic study of the learning of autoethnography itself. Wall said that all a researcher can do is describe, so non-positivist methods are not so different from more scientific ones. Calling for a deep understanding of reflexivity, Wall has argued that the researcher him/herself should be the "legitimate focus of study" (3), not just a partial observer. Heuristic inquiry is part of Wall's method, where through rigor and systematic effort the nature of the phenomenon will be revealed more clearly than ordinary experience allows (5). Wall established a continuum of autoethnography from conservative to balanced to highly evocative, and she argued that the function of the autoethnographer should be to write "an important (story) for people in a dominant culture to hear" (10). In this thesis, I let the story of local music guide my research and method. So, I chose a more analytic, heuristic method of autoethnography in the style of Anderson and Wall, while still maintaining performative, narrative elements. I felt that this mix of analytic and evocative autoethnographic forms was crucial in order to tell the complex story of how local professional musicians make sense of their worlds, themselves, and others.

#### *Delimitations of Research Methods*

This study was confined to interviewing the musicians, employers, and musician advocacy organization members involved in the local music scene in Northern Colorado, along with surveying local music fans and also including my own autoethnographic inquiry in the research.

### *Limitations of Research Methods*

This study is not generalizable to all areas of the music business due to factors such as race, sex, and class level, and genre of music, for instance. The limited sampling procedure I used decreased the generalizability of the findings about attitudes about music and musicians among music fans.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study about local professional musicians, defined here as individuals who earn at least a part of their living wage through the practice of music performance, is most important to the local scene of musicians themselves. An understanding of how and why musicians are rhetorically positioned by their desire to create and perform can help working musicians and their advocates develop strategies for musicians to take more control of their economic and artistic destinies.

With respect to scholarly research, this study informs both music studies and composition studies. My research can be used to understand local level music production from a different angle than is usually used, that being the expressivist/social-epistemic continuum which we use routinely in composition studies. While music studies can use this research in order to look at the factors that drive the industry, and the industry's connection to the local, composition studies may find this research useful as well since it supports the social constructionist agenda, but maintains that expressivism, as a way of make meaning in the world and has its place, even though a reliable definition of expressivism is still in question.

## Results

*“Bruce Berry was a working man, he used to load that Econoline van.”*

*–Neil Young, “Tonight’s the Night”*

*“None of us are free, one of us are chained, none of us are free.”*

*–Solomon Burke, “None of Us Are Free”*

*“Me, I’m fighting with my head. I’m not ambiguous. I must look like a dork.”*

*–Minutemen, “Protest Song for Michael Jackson to Sing”*

This report of research derives from constant comparative analysis of interview data described in the previous chapter. I will first explain how I chose the placement of rhetoric along the continuum. Next, I discuss issues of rhetorical contradiction and ambiguity along the continuum, and for the remainder of this chapter I analyze those themes which proved most difficult to place rhetoric within: *community, recognition, identity, music as leisure, musicians are workers, and musicians are part of an industry*. The discourse surrounding local music production is complex; however, through analyzing the rhetorical implications in the language of musicians, musician employers, and musician advocates (see table 2), it is my hope that we can come closer to understanding the experience of local professional musicians.

### *Placement on the Continuum*

Numerous response points were uncovered in processing interview data which serve as examples of expressivist and social-epistemic rhetoric. For the purposes of this study, statements such as, “you have to love what you do,” “it has to do with heart and soul,” and “they were born to do it,” are interpreted as high expressivist rhetoric. This is



because the rhetoric of musical autonomous activity, the severing of “heart and soul” from artistic work, and the insinuation of innate musicality suggest reified perceptions of Romantic uniqueness and individuality. In contrast, “It was an open ended contract,” and “we had good time and hopefully that translated” and “You’ve got to set a bottom line on what you’re going to play for” represent high social-epistemic rhetoric in that these statements acknowledge the social construction of musical experience and how an unawareness of the socially constructed nature of the music business works to the musician’s disadvantage.

Low expressivist rhetoric is often similar to low social-epistemic rhetoric. I included response points which suggested individuality, autonomy, innate creativity, and uniqueness to minimal degrees in the low expressivist themes, whereas low social-epistemic themes included response points which reflected a minimal awareness of the socially construction of the music business. Low expressivist response points such as, “There’s a nostalgic element to what we’re doing” were found to be problematic when differentiating them from low social constructionist rhetoric, such as, “We want to bring musicians together with the businesses they need.” This difficulty arises due to the close proximity of low expressivism and low social-epistemicism in the middle of the continuum and the rhetorical ambiguity and contradiction of the data assembled into the themes that make up the low expressivist and low social-epistemic patterns. For the purposes of the present research, I apply critical educator Paulo Freire’s definition of contradiction as “the dialectical conflict between opposing social forces” (*Pedagogy* 28) to this inquiry. I found many examples of this type of contradiction in my interview data.

#### *Rhetorical Contradictions and Ambiguity*

Although substantial evidence was found to support the stability of the theoretical continuum, rhetorical ambiguity and contradiction was found at all locations

along the continuum, from high expressivist to high social-epistemic. For instance, the comment made by musician Mac, “music just touches us,” can be understood as expressivist, yet acknowledgement of this idea can also be seen as an awareness of music’s socially constructed nature, in that music influences the lives of so many people, and those consumers often avoid critical awareness of music for fear of music losing its mystical quality. Also, Ft. Collins singer/songwriter Keith said that “the main goal of the music business is to not feel stupid.” One can consider this statement as awareness of the realities of the music business or interpret it as expression of the starving artist mentality, what aesthetic sociologist Cesar Grana described as “The social alienation of the literary man,” and “World-weariness” (as quoted in Stratton 149). Of all 1612 response points collected from all eleven subjects, 12% were classified as rhetorically ambiguous and contradictory.

Deciding which response points qualified as rhetorically ambiguous and contradictory meant contemplating the context of the responses. I took into account how long the subject had been a professional musician and the subject’s level of familiarity with the topic at hand when deciding if a response point was rhetorically ambiguous or contradictory. For example, when Mac, a professional musician of over forty years, said that his band “get(s) a chance to play the music that makes (the audience) happy,” I classified this as ambiguous considering that the response point was categorized under the high social-epistemic theme of *audience expectations*, yet it could also be viewed as expressivist in that it implies a sense of autonomy, or “supra-individuality” (Groce and Dowell 32). Furthermore, this quote is ambiguous given that Mac is a long time professional musician, yet his response was similar to others I received from younger, less experienced musicians.

The expressivist themes contained significant amounts of rhetorical ambiguity. Within the expressivist themes we find examples of this variance in rhetoric such as:

“You can’t let the audience control what you play,” “with some musicians you can always tell it’s them,” and “some people do like happy music.” This type of rhetoric places emphasis on the expressivist attributes of individuality and voice. However, we can also interpret these response points as representative of the acknowledgement of the socially constructed nature of music with respect to the importance the industry and fans place on expressivist ideology and “the Romantic aesthetic of uniqueness” (Stratton 145) found in popular music consumption.

One important contradiction that I uncovered in my open coding process was my finding that the language from the high expressionist categories of *musicians as individuals* and *musicians as the same* seemed to be rather similar. I decided to integrate these and other categories into the *identity* theme. For instance, Ft. Collins musician Mac said that musicians should “stick to something that works for you,” and that “we’ve all done it that way.” Denver blues guitarist Kate remarked that if audiences “don’t take me seriously then that’s their problem,” yet she acknowledged that musicians have “to play songs that are recognizable.” Boulder guitarist John said that “you can’t let the audience control what you play” but because “there are a lot of people in Boulder who are into electronic music we put some of those parts in there for them.” Boulder folk rocker/booking agent Neil claimed that “no scene is responsible for the musician who is in it,” although “we are all working together.” I felt that there was significant ambiguity here which warranted me to place all such rhetoric into one theme, the low social-epistemic theme of *identity*.

In sum, the themes which were either found to contain more rhetorically ambiguous/contradictory response points than other themes, or were more difficult to group together due to the ambiguity of the relevant data include: the low expressivist themes of *community* and *recognition*, the low social-epistemic themes of *identity* and *music as leisure*, and the high social-epistemic themes of *musicians as workers* and

*musicians as part of an industry.* In line with musicologist Simon Frith's claim that "We still don't know much about *how* musicians make their musical choices, how they define their social role, and how they handle its contradictions" (Cohen 127), this chapter, through analysis of interview data, theoretical analysis, and autoethnographic inquiry, will take up Frith's challenge by using focused study of the themes on the continuum which were found to be problematic, their relationships to other themes on the continuum, and the rhetorical ambiguity and contradiction within and among themes.

#### *Problematic Theme # 1: Community*

The *community* theme was originally designed to contain expressivist rhetoric that emphasized idealistic notions of group identity through music. This theme was created to include ideologies that understand musicians as an autonomous group of like-minded individuals, and it contained response points such as "There are promoters that promote music because they love music" and "music is an integral part of the community." While most response points fit unproblematically into this theme, I encountered difficulty when assigning response points to the *community* theme with respect to competing idealist and materialist perspectives of community. In an effort to account for this potential problem, a theme of *music as collective* was created and placed on the high social-epistemic end of the continuum.

#### *The difference between musician community and collectivity*

The theme of *community* was designed to contain rhetoric which suggests that musicians are an ideal group, one which functions autonomously and bears the burden of a group "starving artist" mentality. In contrast, the *music as collective* theme emphasizes an awareness of the necessity for collective action. This action is characterized by what Howard Becker called "art worlds" (767), where artists, including painters, actors, and musicians, for instance, work "in the center of a large network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome" (769). An example of such rhetoric is

Ft. Collins singer/songwriter Keith's comment that "My wife has helped me to no end to be who I am." Not all response points fit this unproblematically into the theme, however, and as constant comparative analysis was applied, it became clear that *community* and *music as collective* could not neatly contain all relevant response points.

Even though many *collective* responses appear concretely socially-epistemic, some can also be coded as expressivist. A typical example of a problematic *collective* response point that could also fit into the *community* theme is Mac's statement, "We've all done it that way." It can be assumed that Mac, a professional Ft. Collins bass player in a popular and long-running rock/rhythm and blues band, is trying to make clear the shared knowledge on which musicians base their artistic and career choices. In this case, shared knowledge manifests itself in an ideology which functions to "organize and give meaning to collective social experience" (Groce 407) where musicians "rely on earlier agreements ...that have become part of the conventional way of doing things" (Becker 770). However, Mac's statement can also be interpreted as espousing a sense of the supra-individual group autonomy, an expressivist ideology of independence from societal and cultural influence that suggests "the uniqueness of being in a group" (Bennett 18) of musicians who "'bootstrap' themselves into existence" (4).

Coming clean here, it should be said that I have never been completely comfortable with some of the solidified ideologies that form around music. I learned the art of performance and recording from Reba Russell and Robert "Nighthawk" Tooms, two of my most important musical mentors. I was seventeen and very green when I joined Reba and Nighthawk in The Reba Russell Band. Besides a few performances and a recording session with my high school band, The Burns Brothers, I had mainly only played in my bedroom, spending hours listening to Stevie Ray Vaughan, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Albert Collins, and Wes Montgomery CDs, learning by listening and trying. I also participated in a few blues music contests on Beale Street when I was fourteen and

fifteen, but those experiences were so frightening that I barely remember them, except for getting to perform with Big Joe Turner, bassist with Albert and B.B. King's bands, and Larry Lee, guitarist with Jimi Hendrix' and Al Green's bands. My own musical bedroom- consciousness, mixed with a belief that I must be a decent musician if I was good enough to play with such high caliber players as Turner and Lee, made me form opinions early on about what music is and what it should do. I held the belief that music is all about the individual performers, and the audience only functions as observers, but my new band taught me the importance of playing together as a group and acknowledging the audience. So, entering a band with older musicians like Reba and Nighthawk meant I had much to learn, but I didn't always agree with what I was learning. It was a growing period, for sure.

When performing now, I like to deviate from setlists. I am not a huge fan of showmanship, and I do not like cheesy banter from the stage, but I do believe in talking to the crowd and thanking them for being there. I like giving visual/vocal cues on the bandstand and having the other musicians pick up on them. I like listening to the other people on stage instead of just myself. I like diversity in song genre selection. Although I have been guilty of it at times, I feel that for a musician to use the live music performance to meet new romantic interests does the band and the music itself a disservice. I still don't agree with all of my musical colleagues' ideologies and I'm fairly certain that they don't always agree with mine. I will only want to play original music one day and the next I'll feel in the mood to play some popular cover song, usually to subvert audience and musician expectations. But the next day, when one of my musical partners wants to play a popular song, I have to be persuaded as to the song's value.

With every group I've played with it is the same - although we are all from the same city, we all come from different musical backgrounds. The community of musicians is one that I am proud to be a part of, but within that community there are

several sub-communities characterized by ways of talking and thinking about what music is and what it does. This means that local musicians are not only categorized by different genres and skill levels, for example, but different ideologies, and communities are not as solidified as they may seem. However, music does require collective effort, which is different from saying that musicians all operate from similar ideologies.

#### *Problematic Theme # 2: Recognition*

The theme of *success as recognition* was coded as an element of the low expressivism pattern. It was developed to classify statements such as “it’s not so much the audience that doesn’t believe in me, it’s the bar owners,” “once I get known in the bars they let me in for free and I get my 7-Ups free,” and “if you’re going to be a heavy metal band everybody should wear dark, good-fitting jeans.” Being on the expressivist side of the continuum, this theme suggests ideologies that recognize music as a vehicle for acceptance, self-promotion, and fame. In this way, the search for recognition can be understood as a transcending of normal, daily, working life. Music can transcend the normal in many ways. For instance, for me music has provided experiences and emotions I have not found through any other activity.

#### *How a Musician is Recognized Affects His or Her Career*

All aspects of music performance shape my identity in a very direct way. The feelings of intense interpersonal bonds which come about as a result of being in bands make me feel like I’m part of a recognized group where I am needed in order for the group’s goals to be realized. Playing live connects me with my fellow musicians. It also connects me personally with the audience. In addition, there is a separate connection with the audience that occurs on the level of the band as a whole. I prefer this kind of connection with the audience over the personal connection, although it is usually more difficult to achieve, due to the fact that the entire band has to engage in a collective focus where preparation and acute awareness of the present situation are vital to a successful

connection to the crowd. Nonetheless, there is something about being the center of attention but also realizing that the experience is about more than just me that helps define who I am as a musician and a person.

Playing a show in front of a large group of people is an amazing feeling, and when I get to play my original music for appreciative audiences, the experience is “the gift that keeps on giving.” It never gets old and I look forward to it more and more. Taking part in such experiences on a regular basis often leads musicians to be thought of as a group driven by self-involvement and a longing for approval. In the words of Del, an owner of downtown Denver jazz club, “sometimes there’s a lot of ego with musicians.” Del felt that one of the reasons that musicians enjoy his club’s open jam night is that “bands get to play on a real stage,” which can be an intense personal experience for novice musicians. Ft. Collins singer-songwriter Keith knows that “it may seem like a vain thing, but you want to be appreciated for your work.” Union-affiliated musician advocate Reuben noticed that “everybody wants to be seen as a musician,” and he has been around the business long enough to know that as musicians “we go through so much to build our reputation.”

However, recognition is a necessary component of a local music career, and as such may be more than expressivist in its motivation. A musician’s or band’s recognition from audiences leads to recognition from employers and club owners, and from there a solid local fan base can be established. In trying to break down this dichotomy of recognition, I find that only my experience can suffice for now. I know that I enjoy recognition from audiences as well as the continued employment that audience recognition affords. Although I want to make money for the musical work I do, I also seek to gather what Ryan Moore, in his ethnography on the punk rock subculture, called “symbolic capital,” which is acquired by “creating music whose quality and significance” (453) is recognized by audiences and other musicians. Music psychologist Julie Jaffee



Nagel referred to this as accumulating “psychic income,” which results in a feeling of “internal satisfaction” (68).

I play music for symbolic capital and psychic income, as does most every musician I know. But playing for symbolic capital *in and of itself* cannot be done in bars and clubs without disadvantaging the individuals who play music for a living *and* the local music community at large. Moore says that rock musicians “develop a rhetoric and ideology that stresses their creativity as artists in opposition to the economic rewards of musical performance; this ideology has been especially important in sustaining music scenes at the local level” (442). While this may be true, this rhetoric and ideology also works to the disadvantage of the local professional musician who wishes to sustain his local, and possibly national, music career. This rhetoric and ideology does sustain local music scenes, but the kind of scenes in which there is a high turnover of bands due to the economic impracticalities of being a musician, and this type of scene benefits people, such as club owners and producers, who are in a position in the community to use such rhetoric and ideology in order to find free musical entertainment for their establishment or new clients, eager to pay for the opportunity to record. While this may just be the “survival of the fittest” of the local music scene, it also works to the disadvantage of professional musicians who take their music seriously enough to make it their occupation. This rhetoric and ideology is exemplified in the “do-it-yourself” (DIY) ethic. DIY is the method of choice for Basil, a Ft. Collins indie rock musician and producer. Basil is also a bandleader, although he probably would not like to be given that moniker, with its metonymic ties to commercial performance. Unenamored with the Ft. Collins bar scene, Basil and his band hit the road, finding house parties where they could perform. “That’s how we got house shows,” said Basil, “we found a band on the internet in that city.”

When Basil returned home he found that not only were local crowds far less interested in his music than they were on the road, but even the local musician advocate organizations seemed unresponsive. At the local Ft. Collins music festival Basil's band was given a slot at an undesirable time in the early evening at a remote venue on the Colorado State University campus. Basil was unimpressed by the local organizations involvement with his band and the fact that "we got stuck playing at the RamSkellar." Fortunately for him, Basil had already been throwing his own shows. He used his parents' house and friends' houses to stage concerts, which "was more like a big middle finger to the city and to these venues," but he still played at local clubs at times. However, he found that in the clubs "we would come in and bust our asses playing a good show and then we get to drive home empty handed." Basil was finding that there were opportunities to perform at places other than friends' houses, and this unfamiliar terrain caused contradictions in ideology of music performance.

It appears that Basil is torn between competing motivations; the desire to transcend the local scene and the desire to be taken seriously by it. As such, a more informed awareness of the ways that the DIY ideology can be used to the benefit to musicians is needed. This is an issue I take up in the next chapter, but one important distinction that Moore raises in his claim about the sustainability of local music scenes is the entertainer/artist dichotomy. Kenneth Mullen, in a study of local music house performers in Aberdeen, Scotland, discovered through rhetorical analysis different musical aims of performers, and argued a fundamental difference between the rhetoric of musicians, dividing them into "entertainers" and "artists." The entertainer's aim is "to entertain the audience and to change repertoire accordingly." For the artist, Mullen argued, the goal is "to play his music, which hopefully the audience will appreciate" (24). For popular music scholar Simon Firth, this difference is a result of reified Romantic ideas of art. "The nineteenth-century shift from music as rhetoric to music as art meant

devaluing the listener's role in musical judgment" (*Performing Rites* 256), says Firth, wherein, "As an organism, the musical work is an object of contemplation that exists in and of itself," and the "model of the biological organism has no need to account for a work's effect upon its intended audience" (Bonds as quoted in Firth 239). The artist/entertainer dichotomy is nothing new, but it is not only "artists" who use ambiguous rhetoric, but "entertainers" as well.

Part of the recognition from audiences which some musicians both desire and need has to do with the technical proficiency of performance. According to Boulder jam rock musician John, "if you play good then the music speaks for itself." We could interpret John's statement as basic expressivist discourse which places the musician and his music as autonomous creative agents in the world. However, John also defined an important element of music performance- -the ability to produce sounds (music) by technically manipulating tools (instruments). Denver club owner Del agreed, saying that "you have to be able to play." While what "being able to play" actually means is dependent on the social and cultural context, both John and Del make a key point. While John identifies with an ideal of music which values "playing good," others have different perceptions on what a musician should "do." There are many different ways in which musicians and audiences value music and the musicians' musical activity. As such, the ambiguity in John's and Del's statements is not a result of their own contradictory ideologies as much as it is a result of the difficulty of placing rhetoric into the either/or binary of expressivism and social-epistemicism.

#### *Recognition is Central to Success at the Local Level*

When considering how to define a local "music scene" the ambiguities of *community* and *collectivity* intensify. When we hear Keith, a well known Ft. Collins touring singer/songwriter, saying that "the whole point of being a musician is to get out of the local level," we are called to consider local music production and its relation to the

concept of place. Such considerations help us understand Keith's definitive rhetorical position as expressivist or social-epistemic. According to geographer Susan Smith, who pursues research in the geography of social environments, music is "integral to the geographic imagination" (Smith 238), and produces local scenes which become tangible as both places and as symbols.

Place has a substantial impact on how communities form around music. Sara Cohen, who researches how music and place interact and help form each other, has said that music scenes "are socially produced as practical settings or contexts for social activity but, through such activity, places are also conceptually produced in a conceptual and symbolic sense" (438). One only has to think of Nashville and the resultant string of metonyms which ensue (country music, guitars, sad songs, relationships, etc.) in order to conceptualize music as both a "practical setting" and a symbolic place. Local music scenes develop their sense of community in part from both the "practical settings" and the conceptual places which form around music production. Local scenes also have many sub-scenes which comprise the larger scene. As Alan C. Turley, in his research on the sociology of music, has argued that "the different communities within a city have been where music has been created. A city is socially divided into racial, ethnic, and class communities from which musicians come; musicians then create their own community of music performance, composition, and identity" (646).

If music scenes developed in a vacuum we would have less trouble coming to terms with the ambiguous roles that *community* and *music as collective* play in music scenes. But "music and place are not fixed and bounded texts or entities but...social practice(s) involving relations between people, sounds, images, artifacts and the material environment" (Cohen438). These relations become more complex when we consider the role the larger music industry plays in local scenes. Bennett maintained that commercial music and "The focus on stars and outstanding individual talent ...tends to take attention

away from the pattern of collective conduct that brings music into existence” (216). The larger music industry is commonly seen as consisting of individual talents, and the collective work that goes into such individuals succeeding does not fit into the image of autonomy and genius which the industry projects.

Not only do industry forces obscure the generative power of collectivity in music production, but they also belie the industry’s dependence on the local. Major record labels are “reliant on the global-local interplay of economic and cultural processes” (Leyshon et al 428). Because of this reliance, a “lack of proximity to...larger markets shapes working opportunities for musicians” (McGregor and Gibson 279) for the worse. So when we consider Keith’s statement about transcending the local level in this light, we may be inclined to label it as social-epistemic rhetoric, yet it was originally placed in the expressivist category of *community*. This original categorization was based on the assumption that to “get out of the local level” represented a desire to position “the individual at the center of all life” (Holman and Harmon). In this way, for Keith music can be seen as “valuable as an expression of unique feelings and particular attitudes” (Holman and Harmon), due to the fact that Keith also referred to his music as “a way to express myself.” And for Keith, that self expression is manifested as a desire to take his music to a global level.

However, some background on Keith is important here. Keith honed his songwriting and performing skills in Nashville, where music is a major part of the city’s economy and reputation. While in Nashville, Keith wrote original music, performed, recorded, developed partnerships, and even had one of his songs included in a major motion picture. Now living in Ft. Collins, he still records new collections of original music, performs locally, and occasionally travels to Europe for concerts. Quite simply, Keith is an experienced professional in the music business.

The fact that when we examine Keith's response points we find these rhetorical contradictions leads to some unanswered questions. First of all, is a continuum of expressivism to social constructionism actually sturdy enough to account for Keith's musical experience? If it is, then how do we account for the ambiguity of Keith's rhetoric when located on the continuum? If it is not, then what kind of rhetoric, or meaning-making forces does the continuum fail to account for? We can look more closely at, and possibly answer such questions, by continuing to explore the continuum of musical rhetoric.

*Problematic Theme # 3: Identity*

For this study, identity was recognized as a social-epistemic theme, but it was placed on the low part of the continuum with "high" social-epistemicism being reserved for themes such as *venue/musician relationship* and *music industry*. Identity was also classified as "low" due to the idea that it contains expressivist notions of the "self." Music is a "means by which we formulate and express our individual identities" (Hargreaves et al 1). As a social activity whereby individuals learn about each other's likes and dislikes, among other things, music is a highly influential sign system which people can then read in each other. For example, if a new acquaintance tells me that he likes Bob Dylan, I will "read" my new friend's identity according to what I know about him and what I know about Bob Dylan, my interactions with his music, and other peoples' relationships with Dylan.

From this information I will construct a reading of my acquaintance as intelligent, possibly rebellious, and familiar with the history of popular American music. If my new friends tells me he plays bass in a Justin Beiber cover band, I will read him differently in light of what I know about Beiber fans, who may be easily entertained by mass-manufactured musical production, and represent an "average culture" which "wants music, provided (it) be clear (and) translate an emotion and represent a signified"

(Barthes 185). I will also factor in the loyalty, support, and occasional frustration I recognize in bass players through my interactions with them. Familiar with the different personality types of musicians, Lita, the Denver musician advocate, might read my new bass playing friend differently, as “the guy who is along for the ride,” reflecting common misconceptions about the essential role of bass players in bands.

#### *Musical Identities are Socially Constructed Through Language*

It can be argued that these interpretations are a result of the social construction of music. One way that identities in music are socially constructed happens is through language. Berger and Luckmann found that “signs and sign systems are objectifications in the sense of being objectively available beyond the expression of subjective intentions” (36). Since language is a tool used daily by all speakers of the same language, one which organizes society, these signs come to concretely convey specific meanings. With music, Berger and Luckmann might argue, meanings are attached through the social use of the music. Identity is formed in this process through what Berger and Luckmann called “intersubjective sedimentation,” which becomes “truly social only when it has been objectivated in a sign system of one kind or another, that is when the possibility of reiterated objectification of the shared experience arises” (67). Since my new friend and I have both experienced the music of both Dylan and Beiber, I use that music as a sign system which helps me form images of others, and myself in the process. In the review of literature in this thesis, I examined Saussure’s understanding of music as operating at a level of sign with no signifieds, but much music does contain actual language, which alters the Saussure definition a bit. There are, in fact, many different factors make that language combined with music operate uniquely.

#### *Musical Identities Are Also Constructed Through the Music Itself*

The social construction of the musician identity does not only occur through language, but also through the music that the musician performs. The instrumental music

in a song may change the rhetorical effect of the lyrics, making “sad” lyrics work ironically if the music is in a major key and played fast. Deanna and Timothy Sellnow said that *congruity* is when a song’s words match the tension or release patterns in the music. Melancholy, reflective words would be congruent with musical release patterns, for instance, and “forward looking dramatic” lyrics would be congruent with tension patterns such as “fast tempo...staccato and accented articulations, loud dynamics, and full instrumentation” (411).

While congruity lends poignancy to a song, it can sometimes lead to listeners becoming bored, depressed, or tired. *Incongruity* between the words and music in a song can result in a strong emotional message “that usurps the linguistic message altogether,” a “couched” argument, whereby the incongruity of the music and “potentially defense-arousing discursive message” (409) result in listeners gradually accepting an argument as legitimate, ambiguity, or simple misinterpretation. All possible configurations of congruity, incongruity, and ambiguity result in different rhetorical effects which can be used to target diverse audiences (413).

Musicologist Simon Firth said that “the type of language used and its rhetorical significance” is impacted by “the kind of voice in which it is spoken” (164), recalling what Roland Barthes called the “grain of the voice,” or “the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs” (188). This is the interaction of the body with the musician’s intention, or the throat with the “song,” the fingers with the strings and the energy behind the musical intention. The grain of the voice is important to Mac, who believes in “not trying to be a soul singer when you really should sing with a John Denver voice, and embrace it.” Also, the positions of the bodies of those interacting with the music can change how the words are interpreted. A singer belting out the words “I love you,” will have a different effect on a dancing audience than on a quietly seated audience.



The signs found in music work to make musicians rhetorically identify with their music. According to musical anthropologist Thomas Turino, the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce expanded on Saussure's concept of sign systems beyond language, arguing that a sign is anything "that stands for something else to someone in some way" (222). Turino said that the social power of music comes from "the differences between propositional, semantico-referential language, and non-propositional sign modes such as music" (222). Essentially, music doesn't mean anything in and of itself, but it does *create* "meaning in use" (DeNora 88). Basically, music and language both have rhetorical effect, and that effect is produced not only by music and language independently, but also as interacting sign systems. This is part of the reason why musicians are so tied to their music.

The interaction between referential language and the non-referential operations of sound as music creates a system which has enormous potential for identity formation. If we agree that language is a part of life that we desperately need in order to create identity, then adding another significantly non-referential "language" to the way we communicate identity can have a strong effect on those who use such an interacting system of signage. As musical psychologists Hargreaves, Meill, and MacDonald claimed, "music is a fundamental channel of communication, and...it can act as a medium through which people can construct new identities and shift existing ones in the same way as spoken language. The continual construction and reconstruction of the self through autobiographical narratives can occur in music as well as in language" (10). This may help us understand what Kate, a Denver blues guitarist and vocalist, means when she said that music is "more of a way of life I cannot do without." For Keith, "the whole purpose" of music "is because I have something to say."

What there is to "say" in music can be both referential and non-referential. Turino clarified somewhat music's non-referential function with discussion of the body

role in music. He said that the “subtle rhythmic patterns--basic to how we speak, how we walk, how we dance, how we play music- -are unspoken signs of who we are” (234). Turino claimed that “Music has the potential of compromising many signs simultaneously which, like other art forms, makes it a particularly rich semiotic mode” (237) and the “crucial link between identity formation and arts like music lies in the specific semiotic character of these (modes) which makes them particularly affective and direct ways of knowing” (221). Mac alluded to the body’s role in identity formation by saying that “music just touches us.” However, when placing musician rhetoric on the expressivist/social-epistemic continuum, we must interpret Mac’s response metaphorically, and the way that his language either ideologically disadvantages him or places him within a context of the social meaning-making of identity. This rhetoric of dedication is often embraced by musicians themselves. Mac said, “I’m going to be a working musician the rest of my life,” and according to Denver blues guitarist and vocalist Kate, music is “a way of life I can’t live without.”

#### *Rhetorics of Musical Identity Can Be Particularly Contradictory*

Applying Turino’s concept of music as such a “rich semiotic mode” to interview data pooled into the *musician identity* theme shows how problematic the theme is when analyzing it from an expressivism/social-epistemic model. Like *community* and *recognition*, this theme contained significant contradictions. For instance, Basil’s comment on the local music scene, that, “we don’t like what’s happening here and we’re trying to make it weird,” displays an element of supra-individuality, yet an awareness of the aesthetic politics of the Ft. Collins scene. Bill, who owns and books the bands at a famous Ft. Collins music institution, says that being a musician “takes a lot of guts and dedication.” This comment can be interpreted as placing all culpability for success on the musician herself, *or* as an awareness of music industry hegemony.

Boulder booking agent/musician Neil says that “some people are made for it and some aren’t.” Applying this response point to our theoretical continuum, we can place it in several locations. For this study it was placed in the *musician identity* category because it represents identity traits that are needed in becoming a musician; however, it could also be discerned as expressivist in that it places the individual as the sole determiner of success. Additionally, this quote can be coded as expressivist rhetoric when we consider that it was provided by a musician employer. While it was quite possibly an honest answer to my question of “what can a musician do in order to be taken more seriously,” it also alludes to “an ideology based on radical individualism” (Berlin 682).

I identify with these statements. Music has a way of sticking to me. I think about it every waking hour and I often dream about it. I’m habitually tapping on desks or moving my legs to a rhythm. I am so used to hanging a guitar over my shoulder or holding one on my lap that when I do, I instantly breathe easier. It’s a *relief* to play music, and at the same time the act of playing music brings about its own unique tensions. Also, it’s exciting to know that people are going to hear and see me play. As Ft. Collins musician advocate Esther said, “people get so tied up in their music emotionally that they can’t take a step back and look at the big picture.” This sums up why the present project is important to local professional musicians.

When someone is involved in an activity which they love, it may feel strange to take that activity too seriously. The personal relationship musicians have with the aural art form is often so precious to them that their main objective is to not do anything which might harm that relationship. Part of that love for music is that music is perceived as being separate from the market. We take normal jobs to make money, and we play music to maintain an identity away from those jobs. In cases like this, which are many, that love and desire for music can be “easily co-opted by the very capitalist forces it opposes”

(Berlin 677). In fact, expressivist belief systems might be said to serve venue owners and advocates while social-epistemic ideology might be said to better serve musicians who can be made aware of the degree to which widely held ideas about art and artists can be used to manage and control them. Expressivism might be said to cultivate aspiration AND acceptance of low rewards among musicians.

### *The Ideology of Musical Identity*

This ideology of identity has been handed down to us through the larger music industry, with its emphasis on individuality and self-expression. While Berlin was referring to the rhetoric of the writing classroom, I believe that his focus on ideology makes his claims applicable to wider social, economic, and political milieus, of which music is one. According to Berlin, ideology “determines what is real and what is illusory, and, most importantly what is experienced and what remains outside the field of phenomenological experience, regardless of its actual material existence” (669). This way of understanding has not been lost on Frith, who believes that “capitalist control of popular music rests not on record company control of recording technology but on its recurring appropriation of fans’ and musicians’ ideology of art” (278).

Bill’s statement that, “it takes a lot of guts and dedication,” may be seen as an example of Berlin’s co-option, yet as any musician will tell you, it’s also true. Without the will to go on stage and perform in front of others, a career in music will prove to be difficult. Also, music production at the local level is essentially a self-managed activity which requires hard work. What the continuum can tell us about the “guts and dedication” required for music is that such statements can be interpreted as rhetorical and meant to persuade, identify, and/or connect, because “A rhetoric can never be innocent, can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims” (Berlin 667).

Musician advocate Esther's claim that "people get so tied up in their music emotionally that they can't take a step back and look at the big picture" harmonizes well with Berlin's acknowledgement of a non-innocent rhetoric. Whether or not an individual believes what he or she says or does is "true," it will still have a rhetorical effect in light of other social factors and ways of knowing. Although it entails looking at music as something that is detached from oneself, an awareness of the ways in which music identities are socially constructed can be beneficial for further creative and professional musical activity. Berlin says that in social-epistemic rhetoric, "the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer "and" the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning" (678), so in considering how musical identities are constructed, we should consider the ways in which audience functions in local level music production.

#### *The Audience's Effect on the Musician Identity*

For rhetorician Sherrie Gradin, one does not have to be entirely focused on the audience when composing in the classroom, and this idea can be applied to music as well. She supports Donald Murray's view of expressivism in this case because it "acknowledges the rhetorical importance of audience as well as encourages a focus on the self" (104). Ft. Collins musician advocate Esther said that being a musician involves "figuring out what you're doing with your music and what kind of band you're going to be." We might view this as a kind of *invention* which uses an awareness of the self in the larger social context as a *heuristic* for how to proceed through one's music career. Bennett found this to be true in his 1972 study of Northern Colorado musicians and what he calls their "contemporary interpretations of culture and art" (16). This interpretation takes place within an "autotelic state of consciousness," which "places subjective human experiences at the center of objective cultural processes" (16). We can apply this

autotelic consciousness to the way subjectivity and objectivity work with and against each other in today's local music atmosphere.

Expressivism is often a "required" rhetorical position for inclusion into socially accepted musician roles, and the expressivist ideology can often blind musicians to the socially constructed nature of the business. The role of the musician becomes concretized through reified notions of what classical musicologist Jonathan Dunsby labeled the "unhelpful mythology" (49) of the Romantic "individual." This brings about a paradoxical situation whereby a musician might need to embrace expressivist rhetorics, in language and/or musical choices, in order to fit into a socially constructed world. Basil's autotelic drive to play music fits into today's society expectations because music is such a huge part of our lives, and it has been proven to produce capital. This may explain Basil's statement that his music is "a viable form of expression." In this way, expressivism is something audiences, musical and "rhetorical," may expect from a musician.

While understanding how music identities are socially constructed can lead to a clearer understanding of the music business, an obvious overemphasis on such an understanding may alienate individuals from a society where expressivism is valued. In this case, an awareness of the social construction of identity and the ways that expressivism is valued in society can be used as a heuristic for an invention of a musical identity. As Reuben says, "everybody wants to be seen as a musician." Being conscious of the social capital which comes with being a musician may aid a professional musician in forming an identity which helps them to be perceived as a musician. In this way we see that "individuals perform and construct socially intelligible identities. Personal identity is fundamentally performative: "identity cannot be distinguished from the communicative acts that announce it" (Gracyk 203). I may think of myself as an

“authentic” rock musician, but the less I perform and communicate that role, the less I am taken to be a rock musician by those around me.

The concept of performance disrupts the notion of pure, individual identity. As post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler argued, identity is “a regulated process of repetition” (Gracyk 201). This is one of the deeper issues I am exploring, which may explain why I often feel ambivalent about the work I am doing here. By announcing to those in the world of local music that musicians need to be paid for their work, I get the sense at times that I am revoking my “musician card.” At the local Ft. Collins local music festival, I had a conversation with one of the event’s organizers, explaining my position regarding the payment of musical acts who participate in the festival. While he could not have been more friendly and forthcoming, I still had the feeling that he was thinking that I was asking for too much. The festival brings the community together, gives musicians the vital public visibility they need, and offers the music community a significant morale boost. So even in “performing” my dialogue with the festival organizer, I felt like I was going against the “true” nature of myself as a musician, as someone who “should” play for little to no pay, simply for the love of the music. This is an example of the work that goes into the *offstage* performance of the musician, compared to the *onstage* performance.

Basil has made use of the performative dimensions of identity at house shows around the United States. A self-proclaimed DIY and indie rock musician, Basil noticed that at house parties “a lot of people see it as a party with a band, but then we go in there and pretend it’s a big show.” In this language we see Basil acknowledging the performative aspects of his musical identity. Sociologists Stephen Groce and John Lynxwiler found that there are many “kinds of information that consumers of live performances use to construct their evaluations of a band’s performance” (106) and that popular successful artists “realize that success is not entirely predicated on musical

expertise” (117). In a study done at Colorado State University in 1980 called “Modeling the Rock Band and Audience Interaction,” sociologists Kevin Jones and Patricia Atchison Harvey noticed that, along with technical competence, or “cognitive symbiosis,” the “capacity to entertain” is how audiences gauge bands’ success. Cognitive symbiosis is a musical group’s “interactive technical competence which is measured in the execution of arrangement complexity” (131), a proficiency gained through experience jamming, composing and performing. The capacity to entertain “includes dimensions such as humor, intellect, sensuality, adaptability, selection, conformity in tempo, volume, lyrical content, and style” (131).

Jones and Harvey saw the band/audience situation as an example of “collective behavior theory” which looks at “a collective orientation and the informational mechanisms whereby the collective focus and decisions related to it are reached” (133). Basil’s awareness of how collective behavior works is negated in some of his other rhetoric. For instance, he says that “if you’re trying to be a career musician, you’re going to look like an a—hole,” and “if you are consciously like, you have to take me seriously, that’s not a very successful way to do it.” In contrast to this rhetoric, it also appears as if Basil is also conscious of the determination and will which goes into being a musician, as opposed to those who simply wish to reap the social capital possible with being a musician. He says that with “some local bands it’s like, you’re just doing this so you can be on a big stage!”

But Basil wants to be able to perform on a big stage as well. He expresses frustration at the local music festival for an undesirable time slot and stage, saying, “Give us a big stage so we can play a big show!” While it seems that Basil is attempting to understand whether or not he wants to acknowledge the socially constructed, performative dimension of the musician identity, touring bass player Mac understands and embraces it. Mac says that “when I hit the stage I have to focus on my parts as a



musician and be in this musician mode.” As much as Mac believes that music is “an emotional thing,” and that “the expressing yourself is probably the main reason” to be a musician, his rhetoric also hints at an understanding of the idea that “the meaning of objects, utterances, and acts is neither inherent nor invariant but socially constructed” (DeNora 92). DeNora elaborates- “With regard to social or conceptual meanings...this implies a dissolution of the subject/object dichotomy as it is generally implicit in conventional theories of meaning ‘transmission’ and ‘reception.’ In other words, the perceiving subject constitutes, given perceived constraints, the ‘object’ through interpretation, and further, the meaning of this response or interpretation is in turn constituted by the response *to* the response, and so on” (92).

Part of what Mac knows about being a musician involves the ways in which audiences interpret his musical acts. The audience’s interpretation of Mac as a “musician” in turn enables Mac to *be* that musician, which is something I have noticed in my own music. I have played shows at bars to no one but the bartender. Sometime in the summer of 2002, my group Minivan Blues Band was playing a show for only the bartender, and then even she left to go into a back room. It was then, with absolutely no audience, when I felt less like a “musician” and more like a member in a group of buddies who were jamming on a raised platform in an empty room. There was a sense of group embarrassment because we all implicitly desired an audience that night, but had none. This feeling did not last long, however, as we were soon able to make light of the situation, laugh at ourselves, and have fun. But at this moment, even our normally solid perception of live music performance itself was called into question. In essence, there was no one for us to express *to*, and the absurdity of live music performance was exposed – we realized how much we *needed* the audience. For Mac, a musician who almost always arrives at his performances with an anticipating audience, the presence of other people to complete the performance situation is not a problem and the fact that he feels

that music is mainly about self-expression, yet at gigs he needs to be in “this musician mode,” can help us break down the artist/entertainer dichotomy we find in Mullen’s study of Scottish “public house performers” and Stephen Groce’s research on copy, or “cover” performers and original music performers.

As stated earlier, Mullen found a difference between entertainers and artists, in that entertainers play to the desire of the audience while artists play for their own self-expression. Groce discovered a similar dichotomy, arguing that copy music performers’ “perception of what the audience desired (takes) precedence over their own personal choices of material” (397) since they “highly value getting paid for their performances” (398). Original performers, Groce observed, feel that “the creative process (is) more important than the things copy music performers typically value, i.e., making money” (399). I find this explanation too reductive and reinforcing of the money/music duality. Groce even foreshadows the intent of the present study, ending his article “Occupational Rhetoric and Ideology: A Comparison of Copy and Original Music Performers,” with a call for more research that determines “whether or not there are other dimensions to musicians’ ideologies, and if so, document their structure and function” (408).

I believe it’s possible for original musicians to perform the music they want to, with the specific energy they choose to foster, whatever that is, and still consider how it will be received. I would even argue that the most musicians do this anyway, and that a consideration of audience is metonymically tied to matters of economic compensation. The idea of music as organized sound which others then hear sets the condition of possibility for social activity and issues of materiality such as economics, technology, and place. This leaves the musician who fully acknowledges the socially constructed nature of local music production in a bind. If the true musician “self” is a product of Romantic reifications of identity, then why would the creative original musician choose to keep trying to produce art? One might as well simply play cover (copy) music, since,

according to Denver musician advocate Lita, “what’s the difference between working a daytime job doing construction and playing covers three nights a week?” Is it truly beneficial to musicians to acknowledge that all we know about music is a social construction? Perhaps by once more listening to the music *fans* we can understand this more clearly.

Some of my Northern Colorado music fan survey participants were eloquently aware of the ways that audience and musician construct musical meaning together. For instance, a 30 year old female librarian says that “I am happy to pay a door charge, because free concerts are often out of control and/or the audience often doesn't care about the performer.” She also says that “no matter how much you love what you do, there are still days when you just need a paycheck.” A 28 year old female physical therapist thinks that “most musicians do it because they are music lovers. For the same reason why we go to see them, 'cause we are music lovers!” However, an overemphasis on the socially constructed nature of the musician identity may alienate musicians from a larger society where the image of the musician as the authentic genius is valued.

Cultural ethnographer Ryan Moore referred to what Simon Firth calls the “rock ideology” which was “derived from the cultural politics of folk music,” and “proposes that anyone can and should play music, (that) the tools of musical performance should remain as simple as possible (one person, a guitar, and their voice), there should be no separation between musicians and audiences, and lyricists should address important social issues...Rock musicians developed a rhetoric and ideology that stressed their creativity as artists in opposition to the economic rewards of musical performance; this ideology has been especially important in sustaining music scenes at the local level” (442).

To simply ignore the way this ideology has made its way into our musical consciousness would mean relying on social constructions during a typical bar gig. This

approach is characterized by folk rocker and booking agent Neil, who believes that the music in certain contexts needs “to be appropriate for the night,” and Denver musician advocate Lita, who says that being a successful musician “depends on how you sell yourself.” While these ideas should be considered, and will probably lead to a more professional music production, they seem to be tactics more suited towards a traditional business than an artistic endeavor such as music, yet they are important in sustaining a music career.

But this is not the identity that most musicians want to project to their audiences, if for no other reason than because it does not sound like much fun, but also because musicians may implicitly realize that most audiences have themselves been integrated into the rock ideology by radio, music videos, magazines, and digital media. Many musicians operate from the rock ideology without even realizing that it simply represents the way that the music industry has made sense of, and a profit from, music production. The rock ideology is not a necessary component of a “true” musician identity. Mac seems to have an innate understanding of this. He singled out soul singer Bill Withers, who “just had a bass player and a drummer and some good ass songs” as an artist who understood what music sounded like in the 1970’s (technically simple and lyric based) and how to carve out a new original music identity within that context.

#### *Musical Identity and Issues of Authenticity*

While an understanding of the ways in which an identity is socially constructed can lead to invention of new ways to perform the role of the musician, it may also lead to negative attitudes toward music itself. Overreliance on social-epistemic explanations of music ideology disregards the possibility of authenticity. As Firth argues, “From Romanticism rock fans have inherited the belief that listening to someone’s music means getting to know them, getting access to their souls and sensibilities. From the folk tradition they’ve adopted the argument that musicians can represent them, articulating the

immediate needs and experiences of a group or cult or commodity” (“267). To insert one’s authentic nature into a piece of music and to represent a group or community is a rather demanding requirement for acceptance as an “authentic” musician. For Mac, this may partially explain his claim that “it’s hard to describe the music we play.” I can relate to Mac’s “apparent inability to describe the music” (Groce 399).

My Memphis band, Minivan Blues Band, plays all different genres, from classic rock, blues, country, and bluegrass, to Latin jazz, pop rock, funk, and soul. Due to our genre crossing tendencies, our changing setlists, the fact that we play two sets instead of one long set, we are labeled as a “jam band.” However, most jam bands tend to be more harmony driven, play longer songs, and are more harmonically and rhythmically static than Minivan. I think that Minivan tries to draw more from older forms of music because we want to honor our southeast American roots, not to mention the fact that we realize that the area has produced great music over the last 40 years, and that our music “works,” meaning that we like it and audiences like it, in live music environments and on recordings as well.

This is why a lot of the music we “cover” and are inspired by comes from artists like Willie Mitchell, Al Green, J.B. Lenoir, Sleepy John Estes, Big Star, Ralph Stanley, Lorette Velvette, Muddy Waters, James Brown, and Junior Walker and the All Stars. Of course, we have other non-southern influences as well: Miles Davis, Django Reinhardt, Black Sabbath, The Who, The Clash, Grateful Dead, Fela Kuti, Taj Mahal, Lucinda Williams, and many others, not to mention the non-musical influences (friends, relationships, family, communities, writers, mass media, nature, love, loss, etc.) we draw from. The fact that we are aware of, and play this music doesn’t make us *authentic*, yet it still *feels* like we get to do what we want more than other bands we see around different music scenes.

I try to be conscious of *why* I feel that our music is relatively “authentic.” There is a constant search for authenticity and meaning among my band mates and I as we attempt to use our individual, creative selves to make new music. We hope that this music will change how audiences relate to music in general as they come to realize that Minivan Blues Band is doing something that no other band is doing. Then, having had a change in musical consciousness, they will hopefully seek us out when wanting to enjoy music. However, there are numerous other reasons besides being authentic which can explain why Minivan’s audience enjoys our original music. It could sound similar to other music they like, for instance. To become attached to notions of authenticity is yet one more way that an expressivist ideology forms an image of thought for musicians.

Musical psychologists Hargreaves, Meill, and MacDonald say that the view of musical authenticity “implies that its creators exist on a higher plane than its reproducers, or performers, which in turn implies that music is something which exists ‘out there,’ in a sense independently of those activities which bring it to life” (12). Of course, this is how musicians tend to think of their music, as a set of musical activities which are used to find something which is “out there,” when actually, the act of playing music is where the sounds we call “music” come from. My band and I are often presented with evidence proving why we are “inauthentic”: other bands that sound like us, the fact that an original song does not always go over as well with the audience as a cover song might, and a reluctant reliance on proven musical forms when writing new music, for instance.

This kind of thinking suggests what musicologist Nicholas Cook was referring to when he said that “the key personnel in musical culture are the composers who generate what might be termed the core product; that performers are in essence no more than middlemen...and that listeners are consumers, playing an essentially passive role in the cultural process” (as quoted in Hargreaves et al. 12). At times like these, we may realize that “it’s all been done before,” and as individual as we were trying to be, we were more

similar to other musicians than we would care to admit. Although, in reality, neither “composer,” “performer,” nor “listener” are natural phenomena. They are instead “human constructions, products of culture, and accordingly they vary from time to time and place to place” (Cook as quoted in Hargreaves et al. 12). Expressivist rhetoric denies this possibility.

### *The Individual/Same Paradox*

It seems as if most musicians I interviewed, at some point, used expressivist language when describing music. This leads to a contradiction I call the *individual/same paradox*. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I discovered this contradiction in my open coding process, during which I found that the language from the high expressionism categories of *musicians are individuals* and *all musicians are the same* sounded similar. According to Leslie Hill’s interpretation of the literary philosopher of Jacques Derrida, the blurry boundaries between individuality and sameness arise because “repetition is what makes it possible to think sameness or identity...in so far as it introduces proliferating difference” (16). For Hill, “the very conditions of possibility of identity serve in fact to make it impossible” (17). For Derrida, *differance* was a way of reading texts and reading the world. *Differance* “implied some kind of mobile, differential articulation, irreducible to presence” which precedes “numerous other binary oppositions: presence and absence, sensible and intelligible, nature and culture, subject and object, and so on” (Hill 16).

Through *differance*, Derrida was trying to get us to see that “presence was bound to absence, and absence to presence; indeed, both were secondary to a prior movement of deferral and difference, affecting (and thus constituting) both time and space” (Hill 15). We can see this in the rhetoric of musicians. All of those I interviewed were sure of their individuality as artists, but also hinted to an awareness that all musicians share this sense of individuality. This slippage, or *differance* between sameness and individuality is

based on the repetition of difference, which acts as the condition for the possibility of subjectivity. For musicians to be able to differentiate themselves from each other, there must be multiple musicians. The fact that musicians do not see this paradox feeds music industry domination in its appropriation of musicians' expressivist rhetoric, where "the grip of Romantic ideology" determines musician activity, and in which "Players and listeners alike are caught up in this swirling scenario whether they recognize it or not" (Dunsby 50).

The Romantic ideal of the individual and its "opposition to capitalist concerns founded on rationality and standardisation" (Stratton 145) actually feeds corporate hegemony through "a sustaining emphasis on the individual" (145). Perhaps this situation is not so paradoxical when we consider that it is fueled by rhetoric and ideology – "discourse, addressing or, as Althusser puts it, interpellating human beings as subjects" (Therborn as quoted in Berlin 669). The ideology of the human subject vs. society determines "who can act and what can be accomplished" (669), and an impactful way that is accomplished in terms of local music production is through the separation of work and leisure in the larger culture.

#### *Problematic Theme #4: Music as Leisure*

In late capitalism, "doing" music has been constructed as a leisure activity. In actuality, there is much work that goes into playing music. This theme was created to cull rhetoric which acknowledged an awareness of common, mainstream perceptions about music as fun or play. Ft. Collins bassist Mac said, "I can't let the audience know I'm thinking about other things." Mac knows that audiences expect musicians to look like they're enjoying themselves, regardless of how that "enjoyment" is expressed. But when people have fun, or play, they are typically "in the moment" and not concerned with external factors such as work or responsibility. And while this is true in my experience, it still took work to get to that point. For me, being able to perform and record music has



required countless hours of practice on my instruments as well as cognitively coming to terms with what constitutes a “performance.” This has meant a lot of trial and error learning. It started out playing for my friends and eventually learning how to play for strangers, and the learning continues to this day. There is much work in rehearsing with other musicians and arranging the musical elements of harmony, rhythm, structure, lyrical content, and performance flow. I had to learn my way around a recording studio too, familiarizing myself with technology, terminology, and ways to summon the best possible performance from myself and my fellow musicians.

And this is to say nothing of the non-musical aspects of being a musician- the work involved in order to be *in position* to perform and record. This work involves negotiating with venue owners, booking gigs, assembling musicians and fans, buying gear, fixing gear, typing, talking, persuading, convincing , reassuring, lifting, driving, and advertising, all the while trying to look “cool,” performing the musician identity so integral to “being” a musician. All of these musical and non-musical elements of the work of music become rhetorically separated through what musicologist Karl Hagstrom Miller called the “trope of effortless music” (427).

#### *The Work/Leisure Split*

Miller has located this trope and its suggestion that music’s “execution should not require work” (428) throughout different “critical and consumer interpretations in a wide variety of historical settings” (428). He identifies the trope in “presumptions about the natural operatic voice and the closely held secrets of its cultivation,” “the valorisation of amateurism in punk rock,” and “bluesman Robert Johnson’s legendary trip to the crossroads” (428), where Johnson reportedly sold his soul to the devil in exchange for musical power and dominance. Miller locates the source of this rhetoric in “Western music institutions and scholarship” which “locates the artistic- and ultimately the economic – value of music in its composition rather than its performance” and attributes

it to “the capitalist division between conception and execution” (430). Through exploring “the multiple ways in which discussions about music historically have rendered the labour involved in cultural production invisible” (430), Miller hopes to come to understand how “we can help to imagine a more equitable and sustainable structure for the music business” (439).

In order to find ways to make the business more fair for those who do the composing and performing of music, Miller looks to the rhetoric used by non-musicians in constructing the trope of effortless music. For Miller, this trope “has not only hidden forms of musical labour, it has also influenced some of the ways in which contemporary fans, music industry pundits and scholars have continued to frame music as a form of recreation, self-expression and leisure” (428). While none of my musician interview subjects operate from the perspective of music as “effortless,” many do use language which supports the trope of music as recreation. Bass player Mac says that “it’s just so much fun,” and guitarist John says that “it’s fun to listen to songs you like and then go out and play them.”

It might be argued that these musicians have a choice when describing the activity of music, and they choose to portray music as fun instead of work. Knowing that music is a lot of work, yet simultaneously understanding that if one concentrates on the work involved one might not enjoy the music as much, these musicians have chosen to make sense of why they play music in terms of the fun it involves. The trope of music as recreation has emerged “when different historical actors-often for contradictory reasons-have grappled with the tensions between what listeners hope to get out of music and what performers necessarily put into it” (428). This consideration in turn brings about the issue of the work of the audience.

Listening to music requires work as well. For an audience, taking meaning from a musical performance means “reading” the sounds which come from the stage. Due to

music's non-referential nature, this requires more work than reading words which have signifieds attached to them, regardless of the amount of *differance* between those words. With music, there is no slippage between signifieds because there are no signifieds. Musical meaning is a combination and synthesis of affective feeling and the meaning which cultural activity attaches to the sounds we call music.

While the musician or composer has “author-ity” (93), the work of creating meaning from music is shared by both provider and listener. Tia DeNora referred to the work of the audience as their “response-ability” (93), or their ability to respond to these sounds which are called music. This cognitive, social, and affective work of the audience takes on bodily form in the events of dancing, standing, and making sense of the visual elements of the music, musicians, and other listeners. Also, the audience's ears are doing work, either gently or violently absorbing the physical acoustic force of sound waves.

With all of the actual work involved in music, it remains a reality, however, that such work *is* fun. Mac is by far the one interview participant who seems particularly adept at expressing through language the joy music brings him. For him, music is “just so fun. You just get so satisfied.” As Mac told me, playing music with a band is “like playing touch football in the park or something.” In this way, music brings out emotions associated with physical activity. In Keith Hill and Marianne Ploger's musicology website, “Institute For Musical Perception,” affect is described as “the suggestion of an emotion, a state of being, a physical state, a state of mind, or an attitude. If we read Mac's language as an awareness of the affective dimension of music making, it might be argued that, for Mac, music brings out feelings, emotions, and attitudes of happiness, youth, energy, care-freeness, and positivity.

### *Play*

Performance studies theorist Jnan Blau says that play “involves bodies, emotions, and ideas, all of which interact and resonate on personal as well as sociocultural levels”

(312). Play is actually the work of music. When I tell someone I'm going to perform music at a venue for pay, I don't say "I'm going to work," I say "I have to go play." People usually don't ask me if I'm "working tonight," they ask me if I'm "playing tonight." My job just happens to involve playing- playing my instrument and playing with ideas and emotions, and while that play is personally satisfying, it also takes place in a social context.

Blau says that "play(ing) is meaningful important work" (312), and wrapped up in that sense of play is performance. Performance, the means by which musicians maintain identity, has even been defined as "ritualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play" (Schechner as quoted in Blau 312). However, often times, the musical situation is not ideal, and instead of being fun, performance feels like work. In these cases, "playing" becomes a lot of work as the musician struggles to hear him or herself or the other musicians, has a hard time connecting to the audience, or encounters physical difficulty singing or manipulating a musical instrument.

When music is not "fun" or "play," musicians encounter additional work in terms of maintaining the musician identity. Audience involvement, ideal sonic conditions in the form of quality sound engineering, and intra-band cognitive symbiosis wherein the band members are communicating effectively, all lead to situations where the work environment is more suitable to the musician, but when one encounters a stubborn or lethargic (or small or non-existent) audience, bad sound engineering, and uncommunicative band members, the "work of play" becomes difficult. This is when a musician's true performative skills, or lack thereof, come into focus. As Mac explained, "maybe I'm bickering with one of the guys I work with...but when I hit the stage I have to focus on my parts and be in this entertainment mode." At a recent concert, Mac's band was ready for a planned extended hiatus, and they rushed through their show. "It wasn't one of our better gigs," he said, "some of our fans realized we were in a hurry to get the

gig over with.” He adds that “you just kind of go through the motions and that happens in sports or business or relationships.”

The tension between play and work is one of the aspects of being a musician that often remains hidden behind expressivist rhetoric and the trope of effortless music. Musician advocate Esther says that “If you know you’re doing this for fun and you’re not having fun then why are you doing it?” Here, Esther’s language illustrates the ambiguity and contradiction in the *musicians as workers* theme and the nature of the work/leisure split. Music is both fun and work. As Basil says, music is “a viable form of expression.” Basil also says that playing music “will be a good time no matter what.” Basil’s rhetoric represents the paradox of the work/leisure split definitively, and where there is paradox there is room for the appropriation of aspects of that paradox. If musicians do not realize that music is work, “the work of play,” then they put themselves in a position to perform music in situations where they may not be economically rewarded for their performance. While individual musicians may be okay with such a situation, it still works to the disadvantage of serious, dedicated professional musicians who wish to be economically rewarded for their work in order to reach a level of *sustained musical activity*.

#### *Problematic Theme #5: Musicians as Workers*

The *musicians as workers* includes Denver guitarist Kate’s proclamation that “booking gigs—it’s a hustle,” and Boulder songwriter and booking agent Neil’s acknowledgement that “I’m not famous and I have a career.” Boulder jam band leader John said “I don’t think people realize how much work goes into it—making flyers, booking, bugging people who never check their emails...” Ft. Collins singer/songwriter Keith admitted that “The goal of the music business is to work, and if I’m not bringing a certain amount of money into the house then I feel like I’m not contributing there.” Ft. Collins bassist Mac said that there are more bands than ever these days “all trying to get into the same spots.” Music is hard physical and emotional work, so an awareness of the

way that music has been constructed as leisure is important when analyzing the contradictions and ambiguities in the *musicians as workers* theme. For instance, club owner Bill claimed that “with just a little bit of effort, people do have a good time,” and that the difficult work involved in advertising and getting audiences to gather for musical events can be “overcome by having a good time.” Here we see a minor shift in the appropriation of expressivism, moving the focus from self-expression to the *play* element involved in music making.

#### *The Venue/Musician Relationship*

As sociologist W.I. Thomas said “All people define situations as real; but when powerful people define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences” (as quoted in DeNora 93). Consider how Thomas’ contention plays out in the following example. Bill owns one of the more popular clubs in Ft. Collins, and I desire to perform there because of the club’s status and high quality as a live music venue. So if Bill decides that music is fun, and I then agree with him and we make plans for my band to perform at his club under the conditions of music as fun, then both Bill and I have defined the reality of the situation. However, since Bill, in his position of power, defines music as fun and I agree with him, I am then operating under Bill’s definition of reality. The consequences, then, are that music is fun, which means that I probably will not be paid for my performance in his venue since Bill can justify non-payment, implying that people do not make money from having fun.

Like any other employer/employee situation, the relationship between the local venue and the musician is central to understanding the work of the musician. However, the musician/venue owner relationship is perceived as unique because what is being sold to the employer by the employee is not typical labor. There is not the element of certainty that an employer enjoys with other jobs. In other words, the work that the musician puts in cannot be accounted for as easily as the work a salesperson, construction

worker, or delivery driver performs. In the music situation, unless a band brings in large crowds every time they play, it can be difficult for a venue owner to distinguish exactly why they sold more alcohol on a particular night. Dealing with a public whose tastes change often without apparent reason makes the tracing of work to profit all the more challenging for a venue owner.

But despite these challenges, the venue/musician relationship is still a major part of local music scenes. Although there are other outlets for live music performance, such as fairs, festivals, and parties, “the economic possibility of the local group having steady gigs is in the bar market” (Bennett 153). In Bennett’s 1972 study of Northern Colorado musicians, he found that bands and venues, “although economically dependent on each other, are two distinct institutions whose participants’ needs and desires cross only superficially” (154). The problem from the musician standpoint, however, is when those needs and desires become rhetorically interwoven.

From my interviews, I found that it is usually the venue owner who performs this rhetorical inbreeding of musician/venue owner need/desire. Del, a jazz club owner in Denver, told me that the purpose for the existence of music venues is “to provide an outlet for the musical experience of musicians.” Club owner Bill believes that “no band is ever terrible (because) you’re witnessing someone sharing something, and there’s art in that.” Booking agent/musician Neil gave credence to the local Boulder music scene and one of the clubs which he books bands for, exclaiming with pride that so many patrons come into that club because “it charges a 1 dollar cover, and sometimes they don’t even charge it!”

These musician employers feel that they are giving musician’s experience, a chance to express themselves regardless of talent and/or ability, and the opportunity to play in a room full of people. However, a) musical experiences can be found elsewhere, b) some bands actually are not aesthetically pleasing, affectively effective, and/or

technically proficient, and c) I have found that the type of patron that goes to bars that don't charge a cover are usually people who would rather talk, socialize, and drink than pay attention to a musical act. What Del, John, and Neil fail to understand, or at least make clear in their language, is that the relationship between a bar and a musician should be an economic one. While venues do assist in the formation of cultural capital, i.e. the development of a fan base, it should become clear early on if the relationship between a venue and a musical act should, in light of economic factors, continue.

But musicians themselves also fail to understand this relationship at times. Even though indie rocker Basil said that he and his band "side step the bar" to play house shows instead, they have still had experiences where they play at local venues where "we come in and bust our asses playing a good show and then we get to drive home empty handed." Although Basil and his band like to tour and spread their music by finding like-minded bands on the internet and then playing house shows with those bands, he also finds "a city that we're going to drive through while we're on tour and see if there's a venue there." Even though he has an ideal plan for not buying into the idea that clubs and bars are the only places where a band can perform, he still finds himself in those very clubs and bars.

Basil is a savvy, independent minded young musician. But from what I have experienced, it is usually amateur, or "hobby" musicians, who fall prey to the rhetorical inbreeding of desire espoused by employers. Hobbyists are amateur musicians who play for fun only. They usually have "day jobs" which afford them the luxury of using music as a form of recreation, unlike professional musicians, whose musical activity serves as all or part of their main source of income. Musician advocate Lita said, "I have a friend who calls them 'not-hungry'." While I purposefully did not include hobbyists in my study, a few of my subjects did refer to these amateur musicians. Kate, the Denver blues musician, said that hobbyists "want to play all the time and get to be a musician."



### *Hobbyists and “Real” Musicians*

Hobbyists are “just mediocre and they spoil it for the real bands and the professional bands that have to live,” quipped Kate. Disdain for hobbyists is not hard to locate in musical discourse. Even musical sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger hinted at the fact that some people should simply not be trying to be artists, arguing that “if talent could be detected more rapidly, quit rates in artistic professions would be much higher” (559). But whom and what hobbyists actually are is a matter up for debate. Who the “real” musicians are and who the interlopers are is something that is being decided all the time, in different economic and cultural contexts. The job of music, like other all jobs, is the product of numerous choices made by countless different actors. The construction of knowledge about the job of music “is an interactional and rhetorical process and reifies and externalizes the mental world which itself is constructed through discourse” (Young et al 376). In addition, as Menger reminded us, “people discover what a nonroutine job really is only by experiencing it” (555).

So when we talk about “hobbyists” and “real musicians,” we should keep in mind that it is discourse which “reflect(s) the way we talk, think, and act about career” (Young et al 379) and that there is no inherent quality to hobbyists and real musicians; just the way we discursively construct those categories. The music career “represents a unique interaction of self and social experience” (Young et al 381). Musicians construct and perform their “selves,” and their career is a part of that constructed subjectivity. When Mac says “I’m going to be a working musician the rest of my life,” we can see how the social construction of the music career is intricately tied to identity. As musical psychologist Julie Jaffee Nagel says, when “focusing upon a psychological model of career choice, it is possible to recast vocational decisions into the context of identity formation” (69). The interaction of the construction of the music identity and that of the

music career can be based on several factors: technical proficiency, the capacity to entertain, the amount of work one participates in, pay, and recognition.

*Technical Proficiency and the Capacity to Entertain*

Technical ability on an instrument, for some, is important to being a career musician. Club owner Del said that musicians need to “be able to play.” Boulder jam rock musician John revealed that his band focuses on “playing our f---in’ balls off,” and he maintains that music is “definitely a technical thing, giving that experience to the listener.” Music educators Hallman and Shaw say that developing “high level musical skills requires time, dedication, and support” (103). However, “the level of expertise attained...does not predict the quality of a performance at any particular point in time” (Hallman and Shaw 103). I have found that technical expertise works in some contexts but not others. Many gigs actually call for less technical proficiency. This is always a contextual matter and depends on the audience and setting.

A broader definition of musical ability was found in Hallman and Shaw’s 2002 study of “Constructions of Musical Ability.” Through interviews with professional musicians, Hallman and Shaw found that the musicians “expressed the strongest agreement that musical ability was related to communication, ensemble skills, emotional sensitivity and the organisation of sound” (104). So, technical proficiency is only part of the musician’s job. Boulder guitarist and band leader John said that “it’s not just the music, it’s the whole performance,” and Denver musician Kate remains confident that when performing for an audience, “I am there to entertain them.”

The capacity to entertain may include technical proficiency, but it also may mean the ability to perform. According to Jones and Harvey, the “Capacity to entertain is an interactive concept which deals with the relation between musicians and patron.”

Technical proficiency is just one aspect of the musician/audience relation. While Mac understand that he has to “focus on my parts as a musician,” he also realizes that “most

people expect to pay to go hear some music to be entertained.” For Mac, entertainment means letting “the people see that you’re happy to be there,” and being “a song oriented group where the vocals are maybe the most important thing.”

#### *Continued Employment*

Besides technicality and musician/audience interaction, another aspect of the social construction of the job of music has to do with how often the musician works. The amount of work a musician engages in has a huge impact on her or his identity. As Kate explained, playing gigs is “more a way of life I cannot do without.” Mac said that as a musician “you have to go out and work,” a statement which Keith echoed, saying that “the goal in the music business is to work.” Keith feels like not taking a gig offered to him will result in him “missing something,” but lately has chosen “to do gigs that pay me rather than going out and doing any gig I can.” But as Mac noticed, “it’s still hard to get gigs.” It may be said that Basil’s identity is informed by not playing the types of gigs of the working musician type. He explained to me that “growing up playing music with my friends was way more beneficial for me as an artist than playing the same set every night at bars and making money.”

For me, when I’m not working, I just don’t *feel* like a musician. This is when the importance of jamming, writing, and collaborating comes into focus, although these are activities which take place at musicians’ houses or in rehearsal rooms. But in terms of gigging, a lack of work means that I may feel the desire to take gigs that don’t pay well, or not at all. It can be hard not to take any gig that comes along because if I don’t I will, like Keith, “feel like I’m missing something.” I will be missing doing what I feel like I am supposed to be doing; playing music for people. I think I am good at it and others agree. Menger claimed that “Aside from monetary rewards, there are the so-called nonmonetary rewards or ‘psychic income’ flows, which have in fact been regarded for a long time as an essential dimension of work” (554). But there is “inherent conflict in the

decision to pursue music as a career for some musicians” because of the “unstable lifestyle, dictated, in part, by economic insecurity” (Nagel 68) in tension with the psychic income and internal satisfaction that come with the musician’s “professed love for their work” (Nagel 68). As Menger says:

The ‘labor of love’ argument (Freidson 1990) insists that occupational commitment and achievement in the arts cannot be matched to the monetary considerations of a market economy of exchange; they should better be conceived as skilled and sustained activities that entail a social value that artists carry out by making a living in host occupations such as teaching (554).

That “love of work” runs up against the way that society views music as “real work.” Occupational sociologist Douglas Klegon reported that “it is the relationship of an occupation to societal arrangements of power, and the ways in which those relationships affect the social meaning of an occupation, that affect the ability of an occupation to obtain and maintain professional occupational control” (273). When Mac says that “we’ve been lucky to be able to do this as our full time job (because) it’s tougher these days,” we may read this observation as underscoring Douglas’ claim that the social understanding of what a musician is what he or she does not have so much to do with music as it does with how music compares to other occupations. Mac’s claim that “it’s tougher these days” points to an awareness that, while music as a global industry has become powerful, music as a local practice of performing has lost much of its social power, and thus has had a difficult time maintaining occupation control. I will explore the idea of the local/global interaction more fully in the last section of this chapter, but for now I turn my attention towards economic compensation at the local level.

#### *Making Money at Music*

Getting paid to play music can have negative connotations. Since musicians love what they do, it often feels antithetical for them to take their music too seriously. The

emotional relationship musicians have with the aural art form is often so precious to them that their main objective is to not do anything which might harm that relationship. This often leads to musicians shunning the idea that music is real work for which musicians should be paid. Basil said that music is “more about expression than money,” and “passion is the big thing (so) who cares if we get paid?” Mac has such a good time playing certain gigs that “you feel like you should pay the club owner instead of getting paid.”

However, as Mac noticed, music is “a different kind of work.” Musical sociologists Richard Peterson and N. Anand believe that this work comes about as a result of the “sustained collective activity” (317) known as culture. Candace Jones, who studies organizational behavior, claimed that creative careers “are often boundaryless careers, in the sense that creative actors often initiate, disband and move across organizations in order to support their artistic endeavors” (726). In terms of local professional music, this movement may be seen in musicians forming several bands with which to perform, playing at different venues for different periods of time, and taking second “day jobs” in order to support themselves and their artistic efforts. Musicians often call this the “hustle,” a never-ending succession of band and solo gigs, side jobs and improvisation in terms of finding work. In his work of artistic labor markets, sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger identified those who take part in this “hustle,” saying that people who have artistic jobs “may switch temporarily to work in nonartistic occupations when unable to make a living in their primary vocational field, without stopping to produce art works” (545).

*The Co-Opting of Expressivism Leads to Non-Payment or Low-Payment*

Of course, there are times when playing in bars for free, or for low pay, is acceptable or even desirable. There are charity gigs. These can be great morale boosters for a band, and they help people in need in the community. Also, a new band must make

initial sacrifices when first starting out. Even an established local band, playing on the road in a new town may have to play for free in order to build a fan base. Venue owners are aware of this reality. But sometimes, with venue owners, this reality gets intertwined and tangled with expressivist notions of music as an art form. Venue owners, whose careers depend on local musical talent, seem to shun the idea of music as a *primary means* of money making activity. Ft. Collins venue owner Bill said that, as a band, “you don’t worry about money” when performing at a new venue with little hope to draw a paying audience, and that, in general musicians “don’t want to look like they’re worried about money.” This leads Bill to say that “being a musician is probably the most challenging occupation there is.” Here we see an example of a co-option of the starving artist mentality by someone in a position of power in the local music business, a co-option which works to the disadvantage of the working musician and to the advantage of the one in power, the venue owner (employer).

Although this co-opting may not be conscious, why would Bill *not* choose to reap the benefits of musicians who “don’t worry about money?” Bill is a fan of music, and he supports the artistic ambition of local musicians, but as a businessman, Bill still has to pay the bills. It’s “the laws of economics,” as he says, and “that’s why we have agents.” But many musicians don’t understand that music is a business, and they also cannot afford agents. Musicians accept the logic that their band is just starting out and often never get past that stage, playing gigs for free or low pay until they eventually break up. Then a new band emerges and repeats this process, and all the while those musicians who have decided that they want to play music for a living find themselves in a music scene where their efforts to produce consistent quality music are devalued.

By introducing rhetoric which represents a valuing of expression over money, it’s the musicians themselves who add to the “truth” of venue owners’ available means of persuasion when convincing others (and themselves) that music and money do not mix.

For musicians, this rhetorical convolution manifests itself in musicians' contradictory rhetoric. For instance, Boulder guitarist John contradicts himself when he says that "the money is a plus," but "if they (audiences) can't do it themselves, then they pay for it." Basil contradicts himself when he says "who cares if we get paid," but later mentions that "if there's no cover on a show or (the club) is taking most of the cover, we'll have a donations box," and how he "loves gigging and playing shows," with "gigging" usually being the preferred nomenclature among musicians for a paid musical performance. The purpose of offering examples of John and Basil's contradictory rhetoric is not to show that John and Basil contradict themselves. It is to show examples of different rhetorical positions and discursive constructions which can manifest within the rhetoric of one person.

#### *The Social Construction of the Working Musician Identity*

These contradictions offer us insight into how the identity of the "musician as worker" is formed. As D.L. Blustein et al. recognized, "vocational identity (is) constructed and reconstructed within relationships and across multiple contexts" (427). For Keith, although music is mainly about expression with "the alternative motivation to make money," he realized that it "has always been a struggle to balance those two." His identity as a struggling musician is formed in part through "socially and culturally available discourses" (Blustein et al 427), discourses which inform people about how and why musicians do what they do. With these recent examples, we see how the "interdependence in the constructions of self and career" (Blustein 429) is tightly woven with respect to musicians due to the complex interactions of the musician identity before becoming a professional, and the ways that the social construction of the job of music influences that identity.

The "musician as worker" identity is also formed by social constructions of genre in the music industry. When I tell people that I am a musician, the next question is "what

do you play?” This means one of two things; what instrument do I play, or what genre of music do I play? I still have not found a way to read my informants in this situation and I usually say “guitar and sing” when they wanted to hear “rock and blues,” or this confusion happens the other way around. Due to our society’s wide exposure to so many types of music these days, people need to know “what kind of music” a musician plays before they can make further connections and metonymic links in order to form a comprehensible image of the musician and his music.

### *Genre and the Working Musician*

Musical sociologists Richard A. Peterson and Jennifer C. Lena defined genre as a “conceptual tool most often used to classify varieties of cultural products, particularly in the fields of visual art, popular culture, video games, film, literature, and music” (697). While looking at the “genre-as-text” focuses on “the ‘text’ of a cultural object, which is abstracted from the context in which it is made or consumed” (698), Peterson and Lena used genre instead in order to “defocalize the text and place the study of genre squarely in a social context” (698). In this way, Peterson and Lena “define music genres as systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together an industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music” (698).

“There’s a lot of different forms of music,” explained Ft. Collins bassist Mac, who feels that musicians should “stick to something that works for you.” Singer/songwriter Jeff remarked, “I play all different kinds of genres.” Denver blues artist Kate understands that at her live performances, genre is important to the performance’s success, saying “I’m not going to play all of my slow blues if it’s a party kind of night.” What is interesting in light of Peterson and Lena’s research is that these musicians appear to be claiming genre as part of musical identity, as in what works for “you,” the genres “I” play, and “my slow blues.” Peterson and Lena refer to this interaction of genre and identity, recognizing that: “Musicians often don’t want to be



confined by genre boundaries, but, as Becker (1982) notes, their freedom of expression is necessarily bounded by the expectations of other performers, audience members, critics, and the diverse others whose work is necessary to making, distributing, and consuming symbolic goods” (698).

Perhaps that is why we encounter Mac’s statement that “It’s hard to describe the music we play.” Stephen Groce found that “music performers’ ideology... seems to involve an unwillingness or perhaps even an inability to describe or categorize the music they create” (399). While Groce suggests that this unwillingness may stem from “an *apparent* inability to describe the music (which) shrouds it in mystery and may serve to spark other people’s interest in it and make them want to hear it for themselves” (399 emphasis added), I find this to be inaccurate because often, for musicians, the *feeling* that comes from a certain “type” of music is difficult to summarize discursively. This is something I have noticed with respect to my own music.

I just like to play styles that get my heart pumping and make the audience move. I also like to try to mix genres when appropriate. When people ask me what kind of music I play, it really is a difficult question to answer. I wind up saying “American music” a lot, although I don’t play “Americana” music. Is this my attempt at displaying authenticity or is it an honest answer? The truth is that I have been exposed to so many styles of music throughout my life that it doesn’t feel right to just play one. I wind up making up genre names, like “ox-tail funk,” “rock-blues,” “cathead biscuit southern soul-rock,” and “rhythm and western” because the old labels seem to allow so little room for creativity. This is because of the way in which the art world that I create in bounds my freedom to create. In other words, for my music to be something that a club can advertise, or a fan on Facebook can say they “like,” or a local record store can carry and sell, it has to have a name which identifies it as a genre. This is a necessary evil, but “evil” only if I subscribe to ideas of authorial genius in my music, ideas which deny my

music as a cultural text and instead center it as a true expression of my identity. Of course, the Romantic in me continues to fight the idea of my music being part of culture, as something which fits nicely into a category. I deal with this by giving my music new genre names like the ones I offer above. This way, my music still fits into market expectations while I am able to retain an element of control over how I want my music to be identified. In addition, I named one of my Ft. Collins bands Old Town Lowdowns in order to identify with place instead of a specific genre, freeing Kenny (bass), Clint (drums), and I to play whatever genre of music we like, while still being affiliated with Old Town, the name for Ft. Collins' downtown area.

Music's marketing through genre categories impacts the music itself. In her sociological study of rap music, Jennifer C. Lena found that "an unanalyzed dimension of research on market concentration and musical diversity" in that "artists react to this environment and this affects musical content" (490). While this is often referred to as "selling-out," where a musician simply adapts his or her music to the present market conditions, the reality is that musical content is affected by the market in a much more subtle way than that which can be called blatantly "selling-out." As sociologist Karen A. Cerulo argued, "if a composer is a product of a particular environment, and hence, subject to its influences, it is reasonable to expect that a specific social context will provide insight into the processes of musical construction" (as quoted by Lena 490). In the case of local music, market influences and individual musical choices form a feedback loop where what we perceive as musical genres are in a constant state of flux; the market and industry provide material from which new local artists may draw, and those artists influence the existing market and industry.

#### *Problematic Theme #6: Musicians As Part of an Industry*

*Musicians as part of an industry* is the last problematic theme on the continuum which I will discuss in this chapter. The theme was designed to contain rhetoric such as

Mac's statement that "Now there is a lot of music that's getting accessible to people for free." Acknowledging the complexity of the industry, musician advocate Lita asked "If your manager is getting the bookings for you then what is the talent agency doing? Are you paying them both to do the same job?" Neil said that "CDs are becoming the new business card of the music world." An awareness of the ways that the industry requires local musicians in order to stay in business is a vital necessity to the success of music at the local level.

I have been fortunate enough to be involved with local professionals who are familiar with the recording industry and how it functions. My old band leader Reba Russell stressed to me the importance of music business activities like making sure that my original songs get copyrighted and getting my music on satellite radio stations. Willie "Pops" Mitchell, legendary Memphis producer, exhibited to me the importance of keeping abreast of the industry through trade magazines. Live sound and recording engineer Dawn Hopkins taught me about how to listen to new recordings by major artists in order to understand current recording techniques. And people I met in Northern Colorado as a result of my research for this project, such as Keith and Mac, brought my attention to what a music career which is based on national recognition looks like.

What all of these individuals have in common is a familiarity, not only with the "professional" facets, but also with the "musical" aspects of a music career. This knowledge was communicated to me through Reba's energy, Pops' enthusiasm, Dawn's silent concentration, Keith's "muse" and Mac's assertion that "music just gets you so satisfied." This non-discursive (and) dialogical information relates two things to me: first, that music does have a complex interactive element of imagination and embodiment which is difficult to explain as a "social construction"; and that successful people I know in the business are still affected by this complex interactive element. From my research, I would ascertain that elements of music such as enthusiasm, the "muse," and personal

satisfaction fit under the banner of expressivism, yet in the case of the aforementioned individuals, expressivism does not seem to be an ideology which is holding them back from success. This is the frame of reference from which I will explore the rhetoric found in the *musicians are part of an industry* theme.

#### *The Music Industry's Reliance on Expressivism*

The music industry plays a large role in the construction of music as a Romantic activity. Musicologist Jon Stratton attributes this to “the ideology of the free market, where consumers have, ideally, limitless choice...taken to the extreme” (146). The seemingly infinite amount of music to be consumed exists because, while record companies are in competition with each other, there is also an internal competition *within* record companies. This internal competition is a result of the fact that record companies cannot predict consumer choice, so they must issue many recordings in the hopes that a few of them will strike the listening public's fancy. According to Stratton, “only approximately one in nine singles and one in sixteen albums make a profit” (146). When those singles and albums make a profit it enables the company to keep issuing a large amount of albums with the hopes of coming across yet more successful albums and singles. In essence, “the success of a few records appears dependent on the issue of a large number, which compete with each other in the market place” (Stratton 146). As a result, we see the market place becoming the “decisive point in the capitalist pursuit of profit” (Stratton 147).

As the music becomes a product, it is distanced from its creator (the musician) and reformed into a commodity. This is where Romantic ideology enters, as “the creator, critic, and consumer...valorise the producer as creator (and) the Romantic ideology serves to distract the consumer from the commodification that has taken place” (Stratton 148). In this way, we see the “capitalist process which has called the music into being” (Stratton 148). The industry must work within a Romantic ideology of “musician as

creator” in order to have new product to sell. This ideology actually generates itself. It exists as a product of capitalism in that the “alienation of the artist from the company is...a correlate of the commercial demands made by the company on the artist” (Stratton 150).

Record companies, unlike companies which sell non-cultural goods, need to preserve a connection between some identity and the product if they wish to remain in operation. Most music that is bought is that which has the name of the recording artist, composer, symphony, or group attached to it. The interplay of individuality and capitalism in music is paradoxical in that without capitalism, the Romantic individual would not need to exist. As Stratton recognizes, “it is precisely those aspects of ‘art’ that are emphasized in order to show the difference from the capitalist system which are of importance in the preservation of culture industries” (151). Central to the industry’s dependence on Romantic ideologies of individual identity are “the ways in which humans view themselves in relation to the culturally defined roles...at the heart of our concept of identities of music” (Hargreaves et al. 13). However,

Most creators are not solitary figures whose interpretation comes from some mysterious and unconscious muse, but hard-working professionals whose work is constrained by the everyday demands of working with others. Similarly, listeners are not passive consumers, but active partners in a cultural process who use music to fulfill different functions according to different social contexts and locations (Hargreaves et al. 13).

But the industry must propagate the Romantic ideology in order to generate products to sell. Also, this propagation serves to enhance “motivation among the individual employees (musicians) by giving them a commitment to music” (Stratton 153) which, in the market place, is manifested in “taste,” “art,” and “good” music. Such rhetorics that are intertwined with the record companies’ releasing of large amounts of

product under the assumption that “people are essentially different from each other” (Stratton 155) and will like different music. So we see that it is not just the “individual” musical product which the industry needs in order to have something to sell, but the idea of the “individual” consumer as well. In this way, the “commercially successful record is one which is bought by a large number of individuals who validate their individuality by liking or buying it” (Stratton 155).

As Leslie Hill says in her interpretation of Derrida’s *différance*, “For any trace, mark, or inscription to be what it is, there has to be at least two of them” (16). We see this in Stratton’s claim that “individuality is asserted through mass consumption” (155). For a music fan to identify with a musician or song, there must be a wide array of music which is available to that fan. This is where the industry comes in, offering many choices to consumers in order to hedge their bets that at least something they release will appeal to those who spend their money on musical products. Thus the individual/same paradox operates here at the level of the consumer, the same consumer of industry-produced goods who may become attracted to local music.

#### *The Social Construction of the Industry Affects Local Musicians*

We may see capitalism as the instigator of the Romantic ideology of music – an ideology which affects both consumers and producers of music. This ideology becomes manifested in the expressivist positioning of some local musicians as they attempt to locate the “real” of their music inside themselves, as an expression of authentic individuality- -not corporate manipulation. What this leads to are musicians who create and express individuality under terms offered to them by the industry itself. Indie-rocker Basil says “I write rock songs so I can play my own rock songs,” and that his music is “pop music at its core-- so it’s accessible.” What does “rock” and “pop” mean? Peterson and Anand may say that Basil’s intentions are a result of “those in the field (of music) tailor(ing) their actions to create cultural goods like those that are currently most popular

as represented by the accepted measurement tools,” which happens once “consumer tastes are reified as a market” (317). Jam rock/funk musician John feels that “original music is a little more personal.” And, of course, original music is a “little” more personal, but not a “lot.” The term *original music* is a reaction to the stockpiling of recordings and the money those recordings represent. Without the industry, “original music” would not even exist. As Jacques Attali put it in *Noise: The Political Economy of*

*Music:*

Even though the modern musician, because he is more abstract, gives the appearance of being more independent of power and money than his predecessors, he is, quite the opposite, more tightly tied in with the institutions of power than ever before. Separated from the struggles of our age, confined within the great production centers, fascinated by the search for an artistic usage of the management tools of the great organizations (computer, electronic, cybernetic), he has become the learned minstrel of the multinational apparatus. Hardly profitable economically, he is the producer of a symbolism of power (116).

Attali’s stark Marxist reading of the music industry leads us to a final consideration concerning the industry. The industry’s emphasis on individuality blinds musicians to the communal and performative activities that music production actually consists of. We see this in Attali’s rhetorical positioning of the musician vs. the world. At the local level, music’s communal activity is, in the dimension which the present research focuses on, a mutual dependence of musicians and club owners. Musicians need the music venues (clubs) in order to have a place to play, and the venues need musicians in order to bring in business. But the relationship between musicians and club owners has traditionally been strained. As Boulder guitarist John said, “club owners, every single one of them for the most part, they don’t understand.” Del, jazz club owner, argued that “a lot of musicians are full of lip service-- they have entitlement issues because of their name.”

Ft. Collins rock/rhythm and blues bassist Mac offered that “there’s still club owners, promoters or whatever who treat us like we’re part of the wait staff or

something,” and Boulder booking agent/musician Neil said that “If you’re playing places that aren’t respecting you because you just have to play, then that sucks.” It may be said that these statements do not represent irreconcilable differences between concretized formal characteristic of musicians and non-musicians, but ways that the commodification of music plays itself out in the rhetoric of those involved in local music performance. Instead of realizing that the venue/musician relationship is a necessary one, both parties often seem at odds with each other.

In order understand why this is, we need to consider why these parties are involved in music in the first place. A simple reading of this situation is that musicians enter into the relationship in order to perform their music for listeners, without which music would be a self-involved activity, thus limiting the possibility of enjoyment and accrue ment of economic rewards. Musicians also play in bars in order to make new fans. Venue owners enter into the relationship in order to make money for their business, a business which is based on an appreciation of music. But it remains a fact that venues have overhead costs, such as rent and electricity, which need to be paid for.

These are considerations that a musician should be aware of. This is yet another reason why the industry’s rhetoric of the individual expressor works to the disadvantage of the local musician as he or she enters into a relationship with a venue with without realizing that the venue/musician relationship is one based on making money for the club. Another way that the industry’s Romantic ideology works to blind musicians to the community involved in local music production is that a focus on the individual gives the impression that anyone can play music; all they have to do is *be individual*. This is an idea that music fans can readily adhere to.

The survey I conducted with Northern Colorado music fans uncovered such perceptions. In response to the question “do musicians play music because it makes them feel good,” the 28 year old female physical therapist said that musicians don’t play music



to make themselves feel good, “it’s about self-expression.” A 28 year old male health care worker offered that “musicians do, and should play because it makes them feel good.” A 39 year old male in customer service replied that “musicians you typically see in smaller/local venues” play in order to feel good.

I encounter music fans who are enamored with expressivism all the time. It can be disheartening to see fans get swept up in this rhetoric, and *especially* the music of other musicians who I feel are just relying on old expressivist musical tropes in order to make fans. I try to be “authentic,” and in doing so I can fool myself into believing that I don’t have to try to make fans like what I do. There is definitely a love/hate relationship that musicians have with fans. But I’m not sure I would want all fans to be as musically discriminating as me. Were that to happen, I may not have many people at my shows!

I assume that it is simply a reality that some fans are knowledgeable and perceptive, such as the 30 year old female librarian from my survey who said that musicians play music “because it makes them feel good, but it’s one of only many reasons,” and some fans are less cognizant, such as the 39 year old man in customer service who believes that “those that are truly inspired play simply because they must.” I interpret this statement as typical of reified notions of Romanticisms which pervade the way people think, and in turn, talk about music. I began the present study under the assumption that the musicians themselves might use this kind of rhetoric; however, while I did interview musicians who said that they “need to play music,” no musicians I interviewed described themselves as anything like “truly inspired,” and no one said that the situation was “simple.” This customer service worker’s statement is an example of why it is not just the musicians, employers, and advocates whose expressivist ideologies work to disadvantage the musician economically. When music fans perceive what musicians do as “simple inspiration,” musicians face additional adversity in the professionalization of their work.

This may be because fans confuse the feelings they get from music with the perceived work of the musician. In this way, fans and musicians are not that different given that many people “regard themselves as fans, amateur critics or ‘buffs’ within styles and genres that particularly interest them, and can indeed be just as knowledgeable as professional critics within these specific domains” (Hargreaves et al. 12). Because it is easy to enjoy music, perhaps audiences (and musicians) assume that it is easy to produce music as well. I get mixed feelings when I hear people say how much music means to them. On the one hand I’m glad, because those are the people that will come to my shows. But on the other hand, it can be disheartening because those people attend other music events by bands and artists that I feel are just playing the part of the musician, and doing it well, much better than I can do. Could it be possible that I focus too much on the music, and not the performance? Should I be impersonating a musical shaman, conducting a ceremony through which my audience can transcend earthly ennui? Will that allow me to unproblematically relate to my audience? Will that get me a record deal with one of the four major music labels?

The music industry, with its four major recording companies, is highly competitive. I found much rhetoric denying the presence of competition in favor of individuality from two musician employers. Club owner Bill claimed that “no band is ever terrible,” while booking agent Neil argued that “there’s really no competition here (Boulder).” These essentialized and idealized conceptualizations of musicians and community are based on ideas of the authentic individual, ideas that would fail to maintain any credibility when analyzed from a social-epistemic ideology. As we have seen, social-epistemic ideology cannot be easily applied to music. Music acts as a kind of holding cell for expressive and Romantic ideas in society. While literature, film, intellectual, and artistic pursuits carry their share of expressivism and Romantic ideology, it may be argued that those who are involved in those pursuits operate from more of a

slightly more socially aware perspective, while musicians, both professional and amateur, seem to be less willing to let go of any of the “mystery” of being a musician. This may be because of the way that music, unlike those other forms, seems to be ever present in our lives today; on television, websites, and in our cars and as the “sonic wallpaper” of public places.

Music is everywhere; on iTunes, at Guitar Center, Wal Mart, and Amazon.com. As Hargreaves et al. observe, “music plays a greater part in the lives of more people than any time in the past. This is partly the result of the extremely rapid technological developments that have occurred in the last two decades or so, allied to the increasing commercialization and economic power of the music industry” (1). The permanence of music, combined the availability of recordings, instruments, and venues which will have even the most inexperienced bands play on their stages, enables the mystery of music as an activity where “self discovery and fulfillment take place away from the job” (Berlin 677) to continue. Not only is the “music as authentic expression” motif all around us in society (think Monday Night Football with its emphasis on country music, sports, sex, and alcohol- all elements of the “away from the workplace” situation that many sports fans, musicians included, identify with and use as points of identification or disassociation back at the workplace) but is also in the rhetoric musicians, employers, advocates, and fans use when talking about the meaning of music.

The music industry is based on the “theoretical assumption that the locus of extra-musical meaning is in the musical object itself” (DeNora 85). If we look to a recent issue of *Rolling Stone*, that much revered media source, we can see how this happens. Given that Barthes said that “Music, by natural bent, is that which at once receives an adjective” (179), let’s give a few adjectives the rhetorical analysis treatment. In the March 3, 2011 issue (with Justin Bieber on the cover), we read that that on the new R.E.M album, Michael Stipe “isn’t as emotionally expressive as he was” (70) on past

albums. The Low Anthem “plays despairing songs at cripple-spirit speed,” and Amos Lee is an “evanescent soul man” (74).

So when Bill, the club owner, talks about music fans as “human types that need that musical experience, or when he says that musicians “have to love what they do,” or when Basil, the indie-rock entrepreneur, speaks of “uninhibited, uncommercial youth expression,” one has to wonder whether these are the “voices” of uncorrupted individuals speaking, or familiar rhetorical positions that make music industry executives’ mouths water. Just because we play on the local scene, and might not ever even see a music industry executive, doesn’t mean that the wider industry does not affect us, and that our ideologies do not feed capitalist interest.

What we see happening here are musicians buying into expressivist rhetorical positions, which prevents them from fully noticing the co-opting of those positions by capitalist interests in positions of power. Most of the subjects I interviewed were aware of such co-opting, but several of them expressed points of view which suggested that this awareness is not ever-present. Much of this unawareness has to do with the “discursive structure” which favors “one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions” (Berlin 667). For instance, Boulder booking agent and folk rock musician Neil, asks “if you agree to play for free, are you getting ripped off?” Neil followed this astute statement with a definitive “no,” but the question still feels unanswered.

Neil’s question points to the ideological separation of “artist” and “entertainer.” Basil considers this dichotomy as well, arguing that “the conundrum with being a musician is if you want to make music or make money.” I have felt the same way in the past, sometimes playing just for beer or thinking that professional musicians were missing the whole point of playing music since they wanted to be paid for playing. But through years of both making music and making money, sometimes separately and often

simultaneously, I have to question the music/money dichotomy. I still have the same feeling I did when I was playing for beer--that music is not about money. And, of course, it is not just about money! It's about connecting to others through sound, enjoying life, performance, and as my old pal Nighthawk would say, making a "joyful noise." But that doesn't mean that we should not be paid for musical work.

There will always be amateur musicians, as there should be. However, professionals should respect themselves by only playing for a decent wage, and thereby freeing up the non-paying gigs so that amateurs can work on their craft. This may mean that professionals may not be able to play as much as they want to, or may have to take second job, or play gigs they don't necessarily like, but playing guitar in any capacity is not a bad job to have, in my book. I'll play "cover band" gigs, especially if doing so enables me to have the time to work on writing, performing, and recording my original music as well. But a possible result will be that venues begin to once again seek quality professional performers (the kind they have to pay for) over cheap (or free), less talented and less skilled labor.

Stephen Groce refines the perceived difference between artists and entertainers by pitting audience-oriented "copy" music performers against original music performers who place more value on creativity. Groce learned that copy musicians see music more as a job than a form of expression, while original musicians' ideology "produces a definition of themselves as artists" (406). I feel that original musicians could learn from copy musicians in that copy musicians are particularly adept at considering their audience. A common argument about copy musicians is that they consider the audience too much. As Boulder jam-rock guitarist John says, "you can't let the audience control what you play," but "it's selfish to say 'f--- the audience, we're going to do what we want!'" Basil, the indie-rocker says that music is "more about expression than money," Bill the club owner says that "musicians don't want to look like they're worried about

money,” and Susan, the musician advocate, says that she “loves managing bands because (she) can be in control.”

What we see in these statements from Basil, Bill, and Susan are elements of the performative characteristics of identity . As the music industry places importance on musical performance in the conventional creative sense, the ways that the terms “artist” or “singer” are performances remain hidden from view. When musician advocate Reuben says that “everybody wants to play,” we might read this as “everybody wants to perform the role of musician,” due to the high social capital musicians receive as being the “sacrificed sacrificer,” the voice of the people. Club owner Bill understands the performative aspects of music, saying that with music, “you just put yourself out there,” meaning the stage and in front of the audience that is the not-self, a sketchy position to operate from when attempting to put across authentic individuality to an audience.

Music is a physical activity involving a performance. The industry, as what social philosopher Pierre Bourdieu referred to as a “field of cultural production” (Moore 440), separates this type of physical performance from the musical product which the industry sells-- a product which depends on “financial gain and audience approval” (Moore 442) for its success. Instead, the industry works as a field of cultural production organized around “a particular practice” and existing “relatively autonomous(ly) from the social structure at large” (Moore 440). The field of cultural production theory is how Bourdieu explains “the interests and motives pursued by those who *produce* art and culture” (Moore 440). Moore says that rock music became a field of cultural production in the late 1960’s with political upheavals and the emergence of the hippie counterculture (441). At that point, rock music went from being a form of (physical) entertainment to “a cultural genre that was expected to be loaded with artful significance and social conscience” (442).

Rhetoric of artful significance and the Frith's "rock ideology" appeared regularly in my interviews with local musicians, employers, and advocates. For example, Ft. Collins club owner Bill feels that "no band is ever terrible (because) you're witnessing someone sharing something, and there's art in that." Ft. Collins bassist Mac said that "expressions and thoughts-- music gives it a way of coming out." Ft. Collins singer/songwriter Keith recalled that "when I was coming up I didn't see anything sacred in the world except for music." And Ft. Collins indie rock musician Basil recognized that playing original music "is a huge part of my aesthetics." Nowhere in any of this rhetoric do we hear anything that resembles the famous proclamation from the Rolling Stones, "it's only rock 'n roll but I like it!" This may be because fields of cultural production are "fractured between two types of logic, logics that shape how art, literature, and drama is created but also what audiences come to expect of artists and how critics and institutions confer legitimacy" Moore 442).

The "heteronomous" logic measures success in economic terms, while the "autonomous" logic "scorns the pursuit of profit" and believes in "the principle of 'art for art's sake'" (Moore 442). We may also read this logic differential as epidemic of a Cartesian duality, or a "mind-body, or mind-world split" (Covach "Destructuring") in that the heteronomous logic extols physical work and exchange value while autonomous logic lauds the "higher" artistic functioning of the mind. And the industry places value on rock/ pop music, its ideology, the field of cultural production that surrounds it, and the autonomous logic that the field has valued since the late 1960's, according to Moore. In this way, the industry can use the rock ideology in order to preserve itself while *really* operating under the heteronomous logic of making money. However, the local musician still adheres to autonomous logic as he attempts to express individuality in an autonomy-valuing musical world which exists *as a result of the industry itself*.

We see this in Basil's comment that his music is "pop music at its core- so it's accessible." Basil feels that his music is "pop" (industry sponsored term) at its "core" (assumes an inherent Platonic unity of an industry sponsored term), so it's "accessible" (it can be sold because it contains an autonomous element of "art," which resides at the music's "core"). Judith Butler's claim that identity is "a regulated process of repetition" means that there is no real "core" to Basil's music, but instead, his music is a performance. To Butler, performance is "a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of the body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv). In this case, Basil's music is constantly being performed, even as he talks about it with me. As musical identity theorist Theodore Gracyk says:

We construct our own identity in the same public process that announces that identity to others. If music is ordinarily understood to play a role in the articulation of identity, there is no good reason to deny such a role to popular music. Unless one is hostage to the myth of pure, authentic self-expression, it is obvious that *musicians and other performers* construct an identity through the repetition of certain choices, such as songs performed, mode of dress, and so on (201 emphasis added).

Musicians also construct their identities through the way they talk about (perform) what they do and how and why they do it. There is a certain way of rhetorically positioning oneself which benefits those in power in local music (club owners, booking agents, more experienced musicians, and the record industry, for example) as it marginalizes the musician herself. The music industry needs the rock ideology and the logic of autonomy in order to preserve the "myth of pure, authentic self-expression," and to preserve the industry's control (economic and distributive) over cultural goods. In other words, the industry benefits from musicians' failure to realize that music is a performance which maintains an industry dependent upon a steady influx of new product in order to a) be able to provide limitless choices to consumers, and b)



find that next big “hit.” This point is not lost on Basil; yet his rhetoric, as we have seen, says otherwise.

I am not so much interested in how Basil (or any of my interview subjects) actually feels about music. That is another matter altogether. I am interested in how their language (our language) constructs their reality. This chapter has been an attempt to do that through an analysis of the rhetoric of those involved in local music production. However, besides the linguistic rhetoric used to create an image of authentic self-expression and/or socially constructed reality, there is something “still sounding elsewhere” (Williams 130). It is a “kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but...in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate” (Williams 131). In the next chapter I will explore ways we might fill in the gaps found in the expressivism/social-epistemicism continuum concerning this “kind of feeling,” and what a study of musician rhetoric can add to the conversation in rhetoric and composition concerning rhetoric and ideology. In addition, I will explore how community literacy may help musicians take more control over their economic and artistic destinies, and lastly, I will review the autoethnographic method I used in composing my thesis.

## Discussion

*“I have blues with a feeling. That’s one thing I can’t describe.”*

*-Little Walter, “Last Night”*

*“All this emotion is kept harmless at bay not to educate somebody’s fright.”*

*-Phish “Chalkdust Torture”*

*“The main goal of the music business is to not feel stupid.”*

*-Keith*

The central conclusion to be drawn from this study is that musicians need to take more control over the material conditions of their existence. I have focused on economic, social, cultural, and economic factors which my graduate education in rhetoric and composition has brought into sharp focus. I have myself entered into this a discourse community, or what rhetorical linguist John Swales has defined as a group which has “goals or purposes, and use(s) communication to achieve those goals” (Borg 398), and this task required me to adapt to a different manner of using language even as I analyzed the language of my musical identity and that of those like me. As such, I am aware that my argument is one which uses the language of an academic discourse community, and hence I do not expect it to be easily received by all musicians. Nor do I expect the rhetoric and composition academic discourse community to find my argument as accessible as, say, one about the first-year composition course.

What I am suggesting requires a paradigm shift which entails a different way of thinking about local music production. Expressivist ideologies remain dominant ways of talking and thinking about local music production, but if an awareness of the ways that music is discursively constructed in society can allow musicians to understand that it is

the larger industry, and capitalism in general, which uses the more expressivist ideologies in the music discourse community to its advantage, then perhaps musicians will attempt to take higher measures of control over their music. In this way, musicians may arrive at a more complete respect for themselves, their craft, and their fellow musicians by taking measures to ensure that they are not being used as pawns by those in positions of power in both the small (local) and large scale (industry) co-opting of expressivist music ideology. This is difficult to tell musicians since, for some, their position of subordination fits well with other aspects of their lives, especially if they are comfortable financially. Another reason this is a challenging discussion to advance is because musicians love what they do, and it often feels antithetical for them to take their music too seriously.

The emotional relationship we musicians have with the aural art form is often so prized that the main objective is to not do anything which might harm that relationship. Introducing the political aspects of local music production, it could be argued, has the possibility of taking the focus off of the music and the enjoyment the music brings. But, as Esther told me, “musicians get so wrapped up emotionally in their music that they can’t take a step back and look at the big picture.” This quote is the consummate example of the tension between expressivist and social-epistemic ideology. It suggests that the musician who fully acknowledges the socially constructed nature of local music production is left in a bind. Do not many musicians play and perform for the sole purpose to “get wrapped up in their music emotionally?”

If the true musician “self” is a product of Romantic reifications of identity, then why would the professional musician choose to keep trying to produce art? Why would they then not treat music production as a Fordist assembly line-type business? And yet, if a musician does not acknowledge the socially constructed nature of the music business, will she not be in a position to be taken advantage of by others? Or will an

acknowledgement of the social construction of local music production bring about a feeling of hopelessness, persuading an individual that local music production will only put her in a position of subordination? Such contradictions, unexplored, can put subordinated musicians at a disadvantage. “As long as their ambiguity persists,” Freire warned us, “the oppressed are reluctant to resist, and totally lack confidence in themselves” (*Pedagogy* 46). The ambiguity and contradiction I uncovered in my analysis of musical rhetoric needs to be addressed if local musicians are to become self-assured working participants in the local business of music.

#### *Filling in the Cracks in the Continuum*

The problem that underlies these questions is this-- the value of Berlin’s theories of rhetoric and ideology, with respect to musician empowerment, is predicated on a knowing musician subject who is a rational participant in culture and society. But music is not always characterized by rational thought. Quite many of the motivations for why I play music that are not based on reason. Something “happened” when I first heard electric guitar music. Even though I was only five years old, the energetic sounds of the electric guitar and the drums made me feel a certain sense of freedom which very exciting. As a young boy, I was incontrovertibly inspired! I was allowed to take guitar lessons at age six, but my mom refused to buy me an electric guitar, as they were expensive, and she didn’t know if I would take to the instrument. My parents bought me a small nylon-string acoustic classical guitar instead.

The lessons I was taking at Amro, the local music store, did not hold my attention because I was being taught to fingerpick and read music from a book which contained tunes like “Eighth Note Study” and “Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore.” I wanted to play the guitar to make sounds like the ones I heard coming from my older sisters’ rooms in the morning, as they blasted Van Halen, Boston, and Aerosmith while we were getting ready for school. Though I was not interested in my guitar lessons, I still

liked going to the music store because while waiting for my lesson to begin, I could walk up and down the wall of electric guitars that Amro had for sale. Identical in shape, the different colored Fender Stratocasters all hung above my head in a row. I remember a particular shiny blue Stratocaster as the sexiest looking thing I had ever seen as a six year old. The salespeople would let me strum it for a while (with an actual guitar pick!) until it was time for me to go into the lesson room and play “Aura Lee” on my nylon-string, very slowly for my teacher.

Eventually, I quit the guitar. But years later the interest was renewed when my oldest sister Michelle gave me a copy of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble’s *Live Alive* on cassette tape. With my twelfth birthday approaching, my parents agreed to get me an electric, a red Squire Stratocaster, and I started lessons again, this time with a new teacher, Chris. Around the time that I started lessons with Chris, I discovered that I could learn how to play the guitar by listening to music and then emulating the sounds on my instrument. I found out that I could do this when my friend Ben left his electric keyboard at my house one weekend. I learned one of the pre-set tunes from the keyboard’s memory bank, and later, when I played it for my teacher, he told me that it was J.S. Bach’s “Ode to Joy.” Chris wrote out, or “transcribed” the notes on musical staff paper for me. This was when I began my journey in learning music by listening to it, or “playing by ear.”

I used to practice for hours a day--so much that my arms, wrists, hands, and fingers would ache. I did this so that I would obtain the strength needed to make the sounds on the guitar that I wanted to make. I sought these sounds because of the identity I would gain by doing so, but also because just the thought of making those sounds gave me butterflies. Since then, the butterflies reappear often, especially when hearing new music, old music, performing onstage, learning a new aspect of music theory, or working up a new original song with my band in the practice room. When considering these

feelings, and their importance to my music, I find that they do not have a place on the expressivist/social-epistemic continuum. For that to be so, I would need to be able to rationally account for their existence. In short, these feelings are not my attempt to consciously express myself, nor are they the result of deliberation about how musical meaning is socially constructed in society and culture. There is much about music and our reaction to it as performers and listeners that lies outside the analyzable.

### *The Cultural Structuring of Affect*

Literary theorist Raymond Williams, in arguing for a theory of culture, located three different stages in the development of what we interpret as “culture.” Williams’ three stages, which all work together through “internal dynamic relations” (121) are the dominant, residual, and emergent. The dominant, which is what we are keenly aware of, is a hegemonic culture which has the most influence on societies and economies. The residual contains older cultural forms which continue to be active in society, and the emergent consists of new cultural meanings and values. The emergent is what the dominant struggles to incorporate as it tries to seize “the ruling definition of the social” (125). The dominant, residual, and emergent are all aspects of the social, which, for Williams, implies they are aspects of the already-formed past. In terms of music, we may see the dominant as represented by the current popularity of Justin Bieber, the residual as the blues music of John Lee Hooker, and the emergent as new, but that which may soon become dominant musical forms. While truly emergent forms are difficult to define, in many ways I see certain aspects my own music and that of several of my peers in Memphis, Ft. Collins, Boulder, and Denver as emergent cultural forms.

But not all culture can be contained by the dominant, residual, and emergent. Williams described what he called “structures of feeling,” which are comprised of “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” (132). These structures are qualities of presence, and I argue, comprised of what literary critic Claire Colebrook, in

her book on philosopher Gilles Deleuze, referred to as “affect,” existing within “a chaotic and free-roaming” (Colebrook 18) flux which language cannot organize and which exists prior to the “self” or “subject.” While *affections* are “what happens to us (disgust, or the recoil of the nostrils at the smell of cheese),” *affect* is different:

Affect frees these forces from the particular observers or bodies who experience them. Affects are sensible experiences in their *singularity*, liberated from organizing systems of representation (22).

The sense of our lives is comprised of elements such as words, images, artifacts, and sounds which we use to organize reality, but these elements refer to a different, virtual sense which we can think into existence in order to understand the questions and the problems that such elements presuppose (Colebrook 21). The theory of affect which Deleuze proposed was a philosophical concept designed to challenge us to think beyond common-sense ways of discerning what we experience. This thinking-beyond” does not correspond the rational ways we usually use language in order to construct reality. The ordinary manner in which we perceive the world happens *extensively*, where objects are ordered and “mapped on to a common space, differing only by degree” (Colebrook 38), but Deleuze suggested that we perceive the world *intensively*. As Colebrook explained, “Affect is *intensive* because it happens to us, across us; it is not objectifiable and quantifiable as a thing which we then perceive or of which we are conscious” (38). Because of this, affect does not happen within being, or the present, but exists as virtual possibility. Williams differentiated his “structures of feeling” from the dominant, residual, and emergent cultural forms by arguing that the former exist within the present. We feel things in the present which have not had the time to become dominant, residual, or emergent. But the dominant, residual, and emergent exist as part of the past, in a continually receding presence. While I may be playing the residual form of blues music, for example, I am not *only* playing the residual form of blues music. I am also being

affected by my environment. It is possible that the residual form, combined with the affective context of the present, may result in some new emergent form, which itself has the possibility to become a dominant form. When this happens, affect gets “caught” in culture, and in this way, we can see how cultural activity structures affect.

*Music, Affect, and the Body*

Because we must think it into possibility, affect exists in a virtual realm. Cultural and political sociologist Deborah Gould says that affect is “unbound: it has no fixed object, no pre-given aim, but rather is unattached, free-floating, mobile energy” (26). We can understand music in this virtual sense as sound which exists in pre-personal singular form, which, before arrangement into “music” exists as different affects, or “sensible experiences in their singularity, liberated from organising systems of representation” (Colebrook 22). Cultural theorist Lawrence Grossberg, citing philosopher Brian Massumi, said that affect is “a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (80). Affect is “the energy invested in particular sites” (Grossberg 397). These sensible experiences, for music educators Keith Hill and Marianne Ploger, are “how nonverbal communication works,” and they can be inserted into a musical performance because “music is nonverbal communication in the form of sound” (“On Affect”).

This nonverbal communication is possible because of affect, and Hill and Ploger argue that there exists an affective “language” which musicians can master through practice. Affect is “the suggestion of the expression of an emotion, a state of being, a physical state, a state of mind, or an attitude” (“On Affect”). Human emotion is not affect because our feelings are real, but when we act *as if* we are feeling a certain way, then we are using affect, according to Hill and Ploger. Although I argue that affect is not a “thing” that we can control as easily as Hill and Ploger propose, I do agree that music



without an affective component is blank and expressionless. An audience needs to “feel conviction” that an emotion is being expressed because if they can just “merely know” (“On Affect”) that an expression is being transmitted, then the actor (musician) attempting to express that emotion has failed. This is because “we often know many things we do not feel” (“On Affect”). This is because:

When I experience data—such as colour, sound or texture—I subordinate it to an everyday concept. Art works in the other direction. It disengages the ordered flow of experience into its singularities (Colebrook 24).

I see affect, then, as sensible experiences in which we invest our energy. Since these experiences are non-rational, we can only be aware of their presence. Affects are experiences which we cannot signify; thus we must think them into possibility. Affect is also “often described as will, mood, passion, attention, etc” (Grossberg 397). Feeling is similar to affect. I am applying Grossberg’s definition of feeling here, as “a socially constructed domain of cultural effect” (80). Life “feels” different for everybody. As Tom Petty sings, “You don’t know how it feels to be me.” But affect and feeling are always operating in feedback—one always influences the other. While affect is a virtual element which we must think into possibility, our socially constructed feelings influence the way we think affect. And conversely, since, according to Deleuze, affect exists prior to the concept of the subject, then the *virtual potential* of affect will always exert its influence on the way we feel. Affect is not a substance, it is a philosophical concept of possibility where sensible experiences are liberated from organizing systems of representation, such as language.

I adopt rhetorician Lynn Worsham’s definition of emotion as “the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structures of meanings” (1002). But there is also strict physical

feeling, and the corresponding physical sensation. These primary bodily types of feeling and sensation also influence the virtual sensations produced from affect and the resultant socially constructed feelings, or what I will call *affective feelings*.

Musicologist Robert Walser, referencing a book by philosopher Mark Johnson called *The Body in the Mind* (1987) refuted the “Cartesian split between mind and body that covertly underpins virtually all Western discussions of meaning” (119). Johnson insisted that “Our reality is shaped by the patterns of our bodily movement, the contours of our spatial and temporal orientation, and the forms of our interactions with objects” (119). The concepts we use to make sense of the world “come after, and are based upon” (119) physical phenomena such as balance, for example. Bike riding can be learned, but only through physical experience, so when “we balance a checkbook, weigh our options, or blow off steam in order to stay on an even keel, we are conceptualizing our activities in terms of our physical experiences with balance” (119) through bike riding; thus we are using language metaphorically.

In trying to understand music in this way, Walser arrives at the understanding that the meaning of music is embodied. Turning to image schemata theory, Walser found that through “bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions” (120), music operates non-linguistically. He looked specifically at how force works on the body, and how that action makes meaning in music. Walser argued that music, like language, works metaphorically to make meaning of forces which act on the body. These metaphorical meanings “arise out of human experiences of social interaction with a material world” (121). Walser analyzed the force schemata in relation to the musical timbre of distortion in electric guitar sounds. At a “particular historical moment,” distortion begins to be perceived as “intentional transgression rather than accidental overload- as music rather than noise” (123). Distortion becomes a signifier for “social constructions of gender, politics, and religion,” and is “available for different

social interpretations and uses” (124). Walser concluded that distortion, as musical sound, is meaningful in that it is a manifestation of “our most basic experiences of self and environment, but it is also historically and culturally specific” (125).

Distortion is not the only element of music that operates metaphorically. Volume and tempo, for example, are also available for different social uses. But Walser’s example of distortion shows us how much about music is based in bodily senses. Although Walser never refers to affect, thinking of affect as the virtual potential for sensible experiences, which we must think into possibility, shows us how and why affect can be interpreted in so many different ways. The Deleuzian interpretations advocated by Colebrook, Hill and Ploger, Grossberg, and Gould enable us to come closer to understanding how affect influences emotion and works as a “suggestion of a feeling” in a body. It provides a way to define feelings as “opaque to ourselves, as something that we do not quite have the language for, something that we cannot fully grasp but nevertheless is in play” (Gould 26). Affect in the virtual sense allows us to understand how the way we feel is a complex interaction of many factors, never entirely located in the body, but never separated from it either.

I try to allow affect to happen while on stage, but that is not entirely up to me. As Gould argued, “affect necessarily is *in relation to* the social and the cultural and thus cannot be thought of as some pure outside, but neither is it reducible to such forces” (31). In this way, affect, as sensible experiences in their singularity, act on bodies, but importantly, *bodies in society*. Inorganic matter is another factor that influences affective contexts. Theoretical physicist Karen Barad argues “for a posthumanist performativity, or a performativity that considers the complex relationship between language and all matter (human and nonhuman)” (McRae 148). From a posthumanist perspective, I am only a musician because of my instrument, and my instrument is only an instrument

because I play it as one. It is in my relationship with the guitar that the instrument comes to matter, but it is also in this relationship that I come to matter (McRae148).

### *Post-Human Music*

From a Deleuzean perspective, affects are elements that exist as potential, and if humans were not available for affect to work through, then affect would work in other ways. Affect is like the potential energy that was transferred from the person who made my guitar *into* my guitar. My guitar's string tension, electronic circuits, and perfectly shaped wooden neck contain the potential for affect, but only when I physically act on the guitar does that affective context become realize. My guitar is an extension of me, and I am an extension of my guitar. On stage I use my fingers and a plastic pick to vibrate the guitar's metal strings. These vibrations are read by electromagnetic machines in the body of the guitar called *pickups*. The pickups turn the vibrations into an electric signal which travels through a wire and is sent into my amplifier where it becomes affected by vacuum tubes like you would find in an old television set. Electric AC current powers the amplifier and fires up the tubes, which squeezes the signal and sends it to the speaker. Here, the signal, now fully powered, vibrates the thin cone of the speaker and escapes as sound.

The audience interprets that sound both physically and rationally. Together, these two meaning making methods implied by the sound suggest feelings in both me and others in the room, and this affective context manifests itself in possible new connections. While this is happening, I am trying to let it happen. Sometimes I feel that the audience is more tacitly aware of this than I am, so if I start thinking too much, I just look at them. It would be great if I could *listen* to them, but that would be difficult to achieve with the technology we use. I feel the muscles ache in my right shoulder because my arm has been hanging down in the same position for quite a while, and then I realize my leg has been rocking to eighth notes to keep time. My old sound engineer Dawn once told me

that a musician can keep more accurate time by tapping their foot to half notes, so I try that; anyway, I became self-conscious about my leg shaking. Now that that little event is over, and with the pleasant image of my friend Dawn in my head, I relax and bend my ear to Johnny's mandolin. Is there something I can be playing which will fit in with the major 3<sup>rd</sup> and high root note he is playing? Becoming aware of James taking a guitar solo, I turn the volume down on my guitar so that his notes will ring out effectively without the similar sound from my guitar interfering.

As I lean into the microphone to sing, it smells bad, and I make a mental note to bring my own mic next time. Over the years I've gotten used to hearing my own voice ringing through the room, so I try to use the microphone as an instrument, allowing it to amplify my natural voice so that I don't sing too hard, which will result in my notes going sharp. At the same time, I want to keep constant pressure coming from my lungs so that my notes don't sag flat. I also try to stay spontaneous, inflecting a word with emphasis if it feels right or making up a new rhythm to the lyrics to juxtapose with the figure that drummer Graham is playing on his hi-hat. Bassist JD comes in with a vocal harmony, and I have to re-concentrate on my melody so that our voices combine to the desired effect. Simultaneously, I am playing a chord progression on the guitar and making sure my volume level is set so that when we get to the bridge of the song, I can turn it up and produce a dynamic effect with the entire band. And once in a while through all of this, I take cues from the audience to just have fun and enjoy the moment. More often than not, this is the best way to allow the affective context, the non-rational dimension of music, to manifest and direct my musical choices.

### *Affect and Ideology*

Hill and Ploger outline a method for putting affect *into* one's music. I disagree with this in part because I believe that affect can be performed but it is never just performed; there are somatic, social, cultural, and economic conditions which change

how affect is produced. In contrast, I suggest that it is a component of the musician's job is to *allow* affect be realized by both musician and listener, which takes practice, experience, and continuous adaptation to ever-changing musical, social, cultural, physical, and of course, affective contexts. However, Hill and Ploger's definition of affect as a "suggestion of a feeling" is helpful here because that it is consistent with my conception of affect as a pre-personal singularity, a potentiality for energetic investment existing in a virtual realm.

Grossberg said that "Affect is perhaps the most difficult plane of human life to define and describe, not merely because it is a-signifying (and contemporary theory is so heavily directed toward signifying practices), but because there is no critical vocabulary to describe its different forms and structures" (80). Grossberg made clear that although affect is difficult to define and comprehend, that "does not mean that affect is some ineffable experience or purely subjective feeling" (80). As I mentioned earlier, affect is what makes up Williams' structures of feeling, and this affect is structured in all cultural activity, even that of non-commercial, local musicians. Local musicians work/play in a world where affect functions as a catalyst, providing much of the potential motivation to continue playing music. And while it is possible that the same may be true for the more successful musicians working within the larger music industry, other economical and occupational factors exist which may serve to motivate those individuals' musical activity, which may be a reason why music in dominant, residual, or emergent cultural forms exists in the present state of being, because the industry requires structure. In fact, we may say that the industry structures musical feeling. But professional local musicians may be better served to understand their music as existing in the realm of possibility, or, as Deleuze might say, as becoming. As Gould argues, "The 'capture' of affect, catching it up in culture, diminishes potential through inhibition and subsequent channeling of that

which is actualized” (27), and with this in mind, it serves *all* musicians to think of their music production in this way.

However, for a musician whose goal is to simply reproduce dominant forms in order to achieve success, recognizing the already captured (present) affect in culture may be beneficial. But for musicians like myself who wish to create, perform, and work in the realm of the possible and imaginative, who remember and want to continue to operate through those feelings we got from music in the first place, before we were aware of dominant cultural forms and their power in society, it does us a disservice to function from a foundation of being. This is not to say that local professionals should not play dominant, residual, and/or emergent forms; rather, an awareness of affect in music needed in order for musicians to understand how culture structures the “bodily, inarticulate, less-than-fully conscious, sensory experiences” (Gould 26) of music, and so that musicians may come to think outside hegemonic industry and media-driven conceptions of music. Music will always have that “excess” (Grossberg 86) meaning which we can’t quite put into words. And musicians may not be able to prove the cultural structuring of affect, since:

This excess, while ideologically constructed, is always beyond ideological challenge, because it is called into existence affectively. The investment guarantees the excess (Grossberg 86).

The way that we shape our lives and language around sensible experiences is what Deleuze calls *investment* in affect. Investment in affect does not correspond to expressivist notions of “essence.” Dominant cultural forms are predicated on a conception of music as something which exists “out there,” a Platonic foundation which implies that “true” music transcends the ordinary. Affect is implicated in and by the social, and consequently, ideology. As Grossberg claims:

...affect is the missing term in an adequate understanding of ideology, for it offers the possibility of a “psychology of belief” which would explain how and why ideologies are sometimes, and only sometimes, effective, and always to varying degrees. It is the affective investment in particular ideological sites... that explains the power of the articulation which bonds particular representations and realities. It is the affective investment which enables ideological relations to be internalized and, consequently, naturalized...If Affect cannot be “found” in the text or read off its surfaces (any more than meaning can), it is also the case that affect is not simply something that individuals put into it. Affect is itself articulated in the relations between practices. It is, as Lyotard suggests, the unrepresentable excess—the sublime?—which defies images and words, which can only be indicated. While affect is intensive, feeling “is a socially constructed domain of cultural effects, (and) the same object, with the same meaning, giving the same pleasure, is very different in different affective contexts” (Grossberg 80).

Grossberg’s argument sheds light on how Berlin’s theories, while suggesting political empowerment, can only do so with respect to rational subjects who wish to be empowered. In this sense, not only is affect the missing term in ideology, but ideology is also the missing term in affect theory. Since affect is something we *think* into possibility, then ideology, as providing “the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relations of all these to each other” (Berlin 669), must influence affect and the way it is structured in different societies, cultures, and power structures. Ideology also becomes “real” because of the way we invest ourselves in affective contexts.

In light of the affect theory I have reviewed here, I postulate the idea that feelings are how affect works in light of social context, and emotion is the conscious naming of a feeling. However, “emotion” and “feeling” are used interchangeably. This may be because of the ways that feeling and emotion themselves produce new affects, forming a feedback loop of affect/feeling/emotion. We can see this in music. For instance, jazz music heard in a cramped New York basement club, with low light and filled with provocative characters, will produce different emotions/feelings than listening to that same jazz music alone in a Subaru station wagon driving along an interstate



highway. Fill that station wagon with a group of foreign exchange students from Japan and the affective context changes again. While the feeling/emotion the group of travelers has is shared, the way affect is experienced, via feeling/emotion, will be different for everyone according to the way each individual's affective capacity has been socially constructed. And the social affective context created by this difference will in turn enable a new affective potential for all those in the car.

I wonder how interviewing musicians from other cultures would have affected my research. When I conjure up images in my mind of musicians from Tibet, Mali, Spain, and Peru, or even New York, Los Angeles, and Austin. I see them all bent over their instruments with looks of intensity on their faces while others sit, stand, or dance around them. I imagine that *all* musicians are affectively invested in their music in some way. Those affective investments, and the different cultural structures which influence those investments, determine how ideology shapes the experiences of musicians' lives. In turn, that ideology shapes how affect is lived and felt. In this way, even James Berlin himself was operating within an affective context which led to his lifelong commitment to social causes in composition studies.

#### *How This Study Informs Rhetoric and Composition*

James Berlin's theories of rhetoric and ideology can be critiqued, altered, and ultimately supported by determining affect. However, were we to simply disregard Berlin's theories in light of the recognition of affect, such a move would only propose new binaries in the field of rhetoric and composition and put the field at a disadvantage, losing one of the most important contributions to critical discourse theory. Instead, I propose we *add* affect and the affect/feeling/emotion feedback loop to Berlin's theories in an effort to see how we can maximize the transformational impact that Berlin's rhetoric and ideology can have on the local professional music career. Although in this section I will point occasionally to writers and the writing classroom, I will continue to focus on

my study of musicians. I do this because I do not wish to attempt to draw any conclusions about writing from my study about musicians; such a move would be a far reach at best. Instead, I will leave it up to the reader to make their own connections, if any, to the writing classroom.

One of my most important findings, that the expressivist/social-epistemic continuum could not completely contain all of my musician rhetoric, led me to a book which rehistoricizes the field of rhetoric and composition and the static taxonomy proposed by Berlin. In *A Counter-History of Composition*, composition theorist Byron Hawk attempted to find “ulterior categories beyond...expressivism and social-epistemic rhetoric” (87). Hawk found that expressivism often includes many different forms of meaning-making rhetoric, and as such, tends to be the category in which hard-to-define rhetorics are placed. With respect to social-epistemic rhetoric, Hawk felt that the term, while valuable, is only worthwhile when considering rational discourse. In order to attempt a move beyond this binary, Hawk brought a long abandoned term, vitalism, back into the disciplinary discussion. Vitalism, simply put, is the theory or process of defining life. Hawk argued that vitalism, as it pertains to rhetoric, had been subsumed into expressivism due to its interpretation as a method “left up to the mysterious gift of geniuses” (34).

Vitalism for Hawk is divided into three sub-categories: *oppositional*, which “looks to notions of electromagnetic force” (136) to explain life, *investigative*, which “examined evolution and cell theory” (137), and *complex*, which “complet(ed) the shift from substance-based theories to event-based theories” (139). Complex vitalism, the type that Hawk argued for bringing to writing pedagogy, is defined by the realization that life “could no longer be seen as a thing: it was clear that complex forces ground matter and that micro levels of information affect development and organization” (139). We tend to think of life as some substance in the body, but here Hawk is advancing the notion

that information, such as DNA, is a key part of the way life works. The move from life as substance-based to information-based is how Hawk bridges vitalism from science to rhetoric.

Vitalism, “in most of its forms does not subscribe to subjectivism, individualism, or an individual will” (20), but instead seeks “a more in-depth understanding of life (which) becomes a key aspect of a methodical practice within complex contexts” (48). Central to this understanding of life is the way that bodily knowledge interacts with rational knowledge, and vice-versa. I interpret Hawk’s vitalism as a way to take into account the complex interactions of rational and non-rational knowledge as they influence epistemology. This is where we see Berlin’s taxonomy of ideology encountering problems in light of Hawk. As Hawk argued, “Berlin accepts a Marxist framework for his politics and writing pedagogy (wherein) language and ideology become a more central element in his epistemological maps, a turn that ultimately excludes vitalist or bodily epistemologies in favor of more mind-centered pedagogies that focus on unmasking false consciousness” (8).

Similar to writing students who believe in the “general principle” that writing can “change the world,” musicians may find that “historical circumstances are such that this belief in and of itself is not enough to generate change” (Hawk 79). As a result, musicians “come to believe that we cannot change...according to our desire” (Hawk 79), which leads to cynicism. Hawk argued that social-epistemicism “is a teleological system” (80) which “wants to see the subject in relation to the elements of the communications triangle but can only imagine, ironically, a more mystical notion of this relationship” (112). Berlin’s social-epistemicism basically assumes a choice for those he seeks to liberate from repression. Applied to music, social-epistemicism has the potential to distance musicians from music once they realize that change is not possible unless one

accepts “the way things are.” This is where I see the importance of a direct application of Hawk’s vitalism to the local professional musician experience.

Hawk helps bridge the gap between Berlin and the local musician. Without a consideration of how musicians make meaning through complex vitalist epistemologies, Berlin’s theories of expressivism and social-epistemicism leave the musician as a strictly political figure. Of course, as we have seen, musicians are political figures, but part of the reason they are political is because they deal with a type of knowledge which cannot be easily assigned into a rationally comprehensible category. Hawk presents us with the notion of complex vitalism as a solution to this conundrum. Complex vitalism is a term which can help writing instructors understand how students make meaning, through composition, in often unpredictable ways; however, vitalism, in this sense, is also of use to inquiry into how musicians make meaning of the unique situations they find themselves in- situations in which rational knowledge is but a part. For writers, the situation is similar. Not all meaning-making processes for writers are rational, and a complex vitalist epistemology added to composition theory allows us to adapt social-epistemic theory to individual writers, each bringing their own histories, rationalities, and bodies into the classroom.

This move into complexity theory can also help composition theory understand what I call the “expressivism of critical discourse.” At times during my research, I wondered if researching the rhetoric and ideology of local professional musicians through the autoethnographic method was becoming expressivist in its own right. I began to feel like my foray into the musician experience was indicative of the “authentic” nature of critical inquiry, with me as the isolated literary figure, a burdened upholder of truth, and the ultimate “sacrificed sacrificer” (Attali 12). This was especially evident during one of my interviews. I met Boulder folk rock musician Neil in a coffee shop in Boulder, and we instantly hit it off. With the snow falling in sheets outside, Neil and I launched right

into a discussion of the differences and similarities between the Ft. Collins and Boulder music scenes. Later, during my formal interview of Neil in a back room of the shop, things were going fine until I asked him if he ever sees musicians getting “ripped off” by Boulder music venues, and if musicians allow this to happen because they desire so much to perform publicly that they will accept non-payment for their performance.

At this point the interview became tense, with Neil expressing his obvious disapproval of my question. Neil, who also books music acts at two local venues, repeatedly shifted around in his chair, shook his head and looked with disbelief into the rafters, searching for answers to my question. He eventually replied, in broken-rhythm speech, that he has never seen anyone get taken advantage of, nor has he himself ever been taken advantage of. Neil then extended this appraisal further, saying “I’ve always seen music scenes be pretty fair.” Neil’s answers seemed to imply that I was not only ignorant of “music scenes” in general, but also that my motives were in question. “Maybe I don’t need that much,” he said, “Maybe I’m a fool, but I never feel like I’m getting ripped off.” Although my intentions were to help musicians, the fact that I was doing this by attempting to uncover unconscious ideological reasoning made me suspect. I had to clear my throat a couple of times and my heart beat increased. Thoughts skipped through my brain- *Okay, why am I doing this again? He’s right--music is better when money is not involved--I’ve always known that.* “No one signed up to be a sucker,” Neil continued. It took physical effort to stay on track and challenge Neil’s rhetorical position. Neil and I had never met before this interview. Neil had no idea why I was interviewing him; he only knew I was doing it to get material for a college paper. And this was the first time I had challenged the ideology, face to face, of a musician I did not know personally, in a town (Boulder) I was new to.

After the interview, and once my digital MP3 note taking device was turned off, I struck up a conversation about Gibson acoustic guitars and bluesman “Mississippi” John

Hurt, two of my favorite music related subjects. I felt that this was necessary because I wanted to retain my status as a musician. My standing as a musician has traditionally relied on a few things: having public performances at which to play, being part of a band that gets together and practices frequently, and being seen as a musician in the eyes of others, especially other musicians. Criticizing the politics of venues and music scenes is familiar territory for me; criticizing the politics of my fellow musicians is not. In my attempt to help local musicians become empowered, I began to feel the “social alienation of the literary man” creeping in.

As musicologist Simon Frith claimed, “realism inevitably means a non-romantic account of social life, and a highly romantic account of human nature” (“Towards An Aesthetic” 44). In my concern about myself “going native” and becoming exactly what I was arguing against, what was on the line was my own status as a musician, and the possible loss of “self” that losing that status would mean. And what it means is both dialogic and affective. In fact, it is not only both, but it’s a unique interweaving of both; a kind of *dialog-affective* epistemology. In this way, a consideration of how affect works in musical politics may be a way to incorporate Berlin’s theories into musician ideology without those theories becoming expressivist. The feeling and emotion “sounding out” as a result of my research with Neil points to the possibility that the reason our interview turned sour was because we were attempting to grapple with the highly affective realm of local music production by using reason.

Deborah Gould reminded us that contrary “to accounts that assume rational actors or that lodge emotion within cognition and thus see the former as largely coherent and uncomplicated, a focus on affect advances our scholarship by forcing us to contend with the complexity and indeterminacy of human thought and feeling, and the unpredictability thereby introduced into political behavior” (29). Looking back, it wasn’t until my digital MP3 recorder was turned off that Neil and I talked about how much

music means to us. When the recorder was on, the discussion was an attempt to discuss music and ideology rationally. Once I turned the recorder off, I began to breathe easier, we both moved around a lot more while talking, our voices intensified, and the discussion became more “musical.” Perhaps it is not a coincidence that this final discussion was what enabled a mutual understanding to form between Neil and me before we parted ways that snowy day. I am now convinced that the next time I interview a musician, I will try to incorporate more non-rational meaning making activity in order to allow the interview to become more musical. Another consideration is the way that musicality (flow, rhythm, tone, non-rationality) works in interviewing *any* subject.

I will offer a few final ways that my research may inform the field of rhetoric and composition in the form of future possible research questions. These questions are drawn from ambiguities and contradictions found within the problematic themes of the continuum, and while they have developed from my inquiry into local music production, it is possible that the application of Berlinian theory to the actual lived experience of musicians may be able to illuminate how rhetoric and ideology work in other walks of life, of which the writing classroom is one. Here are some possible areas of future inquiry: In what ways might the community of the classroom manifest itself in a sense of expressivist supra-individuality? How instead can we use the diversity of students’ experience in acknowledging the collective effort which goes into a writing class achieving its goals? How can this be realized by centering our attention on what rhetorician Marilyn Cooper called the “ecology” of writing, which, contrary to Berlin’s social-epistemic view of a writer “persuad(ing) others to believe as he does” (366), focuses instead on writing as a dynamic “activity through which a person is thoroughly engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems” (367)?

Realizing that ecological systems are “in real time...constantly changing” and, in contrast to “static and limited categories of contextual models (are) interlocking systems

which structure the social activity of writing” (Cooper 368), how can we explore identity in the classroom? Can examining the ways our identities are constantly changing and performative allow students to come to understand Berlin’s modes of rhetoric from a more “personal” and/or vitalistic perspective, where both bodily knowledge and rational information become implicated in a complex web of meaning? How can we apply this perspective to the classroom in order to form an *unpredictable* methodology, mirroring local music production? The unpredictable method would see that “self-actualization through work, which makes artistic activity so attractive, occur(ing) only if the outcome is unpredictable, (where) the possibilities of personal invention are wide open, (yet) at the same time, the artist (*writer*) is never sure that she will express herself in her work as she expected to” (Menger 558). And how can we incorporate into the classroom what we learned here about autoethnography? At the end of this chapter I will attempt to answer this question as I explore the implications which have resulted from my autoethnographic method, but first I would like to look at how community literacy theory may help extend the work done here into the world of the local professional musician.

#### *Applying Community Literacy to Local Music*

For radical educator Paulo Freire, literacy, as the subtitle of his 1987 book co-authored with critical literacy expert with Donaldo Macedo implies, means *Reading the Word and the World*. Literacy, for Freire, entails “a critical reading of reality” (*Literacy* 34) where “Reading does not consist of merely decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (*Literacy* 29). Critical pedagogy specialist Henry Giroux offered his interpretation of Freirean literacy, arguing that to be able to “name one’s experience is part of what it means to ‘read’ the world and to begin to understand the political nature of the limits and possibilities that make up the larger society” (7). In this way, literacy is “an emancipatory political project” (Giroux 7) which is used to help students realize their agency in the world.



In search of social transformation, and driven by a humanist and pedagogical desire for the self-empowerment of oppressed people, Freire applied his literacy efforts to the community, not just students in the school environment. Integral to this project is a denial of the “‘banking’ concept of education” (*Pedagogy* 53) which sees knowledge as a “gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (53). Under this model, a student is a passive receptacle waiting to be filled with the knowledge that the teacher gives him. But Freire recognizes and encourages the knowledge that students themselves bring to pedagogical situations. This results in “*co-intentional* education” (*Pedagogy* 51) in which students and teachers teach each other, and knowledge “emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (*Pedagogy* 53).

When these literacy conditions are set, the critical educator and his students can begin to work on the empowerment of the oppressed. This is done by moving away from the banking model and instead using a “‘Problem-posing’” (*Pedagogy* 60) model of education, which responds to “the essence of consciousness-*intentionality*... (and) embodies communication” (60). Problem solving “epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being conscious *of*, not only as intent on objects but ...consciousness as consciousness *of* consciousness” (60). Problem solving is dependent on the oppressed realizing “that they, too, ‘know things’ they have learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men” (*Pedagogy* 45).

Part of what individuals, oppressed or otherwise, know is based in a combination of rational and non-rational knowledge. Rhetorician Kristie Fleckstein proposed the concept of *imageword*, which works according to the double logics of language’s *as if* logic and the bodily senses’ *is* logic. *As if* logic marks “boundaries by separating reality into categories and subjects” 27) while *is* logic is corporeal and “inseparable from

imagistic communication” (24). These two logics intertwine and create meaning together. With respect to musicians’ unique brand of *is* logic, we may consider musicologist Jerrold Levinson’s introduction of the term “musical literacy,” which may be “largely tacit, not explicit” (24). Musicians often gain this knowledge “in a largely intuitive, experiential, non-verbally-mediated way” (24). A musically literate person:

need never have digested a formal definition of concerto or fugue, need never have grasped the least fundamental aspect of harmonic theory, (but) need only have an implicit grasp of these things—in his bones and ears, so to speak. His literacy ultimately resides in a set of experientially induced, context-sensitive dispositions to respond appropriately to musical events in specific settings, and not in terms of recoverable information in a mental dictionary of musical matters. (25)

In this case, we can access what performance scholar Robert DeChaine calls the “heuristic power of musical experience” (82). For DeChaine, “Musical experience forces an encounter between mind and body, clearing a liminal space that is simultaneously charged with affect and fraught with tension. Musical experience *seeps*, exposing the arbitrariness of binary divisions between memory/imagination and subject/object” (81). This is the type of knowledge musicians bring to events of problem solving in which they come to realize the ways that they have been operating under dominating systems which decrease the affective possibility of music. Using problem solving to advance the struggle of the oppressed “begins with men’s recognition that they have been destroyed” (50), Freire argued. However, through this uneasy recognition, and in the course of an engagement with critical dialogue, the oppressed can begin to see “examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor” (46), such as the suggestion that the oppressors, “in the act of *having* as a possessing class...suffocate in their possessions and no longer *are*; they merely *have*” (41). Recognizing the vulnerability of the oppressor is not enough, though. The oppressed must also realize how “they prefer the security of conformity

with their state of unfreedom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom” (30).

Quite simply, we may see the oppressors of local professional musicians as those who control the means of production and distribution of music; namely, venue and label owners, radio programmers, and the wider music industry. As culture has structured what we know as “music” into dominant, residual, and emergent forms, local musicians who think within the continually receding presence of these social forms become, according to Freire, “Submerged in reality (and) cannot perceive clearly the ‘order’ which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized” (*Pedagogy* 44). Freedom in this case depends on “educational projects, which should be carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them” (36), which consists of “Critical and liberating dialogue...reflective participation in the act of liberation” (47), and “dialogic cultural action” (148). This action consists of cooperation, unity, organization, and “cultural synthesis,” in which the “dialectical relations of *permanence* and *change*,” which are present in any society’s cultural action are surmounted by learning “with the people, about the people’s world” (161).

#### *Musician Organizations as Potential Sites for Community Literacy*

In local musical circles, this type of learning has traditionally taken place informally. In light of the fact that there are no formal rules, doctrines, or laws governing local music production, musicians, venue owners, and others involved in local music production typically make up their own rules and codes in order to regulate musical activity. As music sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger finds, “Learning by doing plays such a decisive role in many artworlds initial training is an imperfect filtering device” (541). In the music artworld, the line between amateur and professional is being constantly redefined, and there is no formal definition of what a “musician” is. As such,

extramusical activity works as a kind of “non-musical improvisation” which musicians must use to navigate the ever-changing conditions of the business.

With two musician organizations I researched, this improvisatory approach was used as well, with any formality coming from board meetings where the group would decide how to use its limited funds in order to aid the local music scene. Of course, things were different with respect to the organized musicians’ union in Denver, whose president, Reuben, engages in official collective bargaining with civic and state-run bureaucracies. However, Reuben’s organization is primarily made up of orchestra and studio musicians, an elite group of technicians who differ from “popular” musicians such as myself in that they are less reliant on building audiences, engaging directly with venue owners, performing self-composed music, where in the local scene that I am familiar with, “each musician behaves like his own employment agency, compil(ing) an inventory of probable and possible jobs” (Menger 547). This is what is required of a self-employed musician who does not have the benefit of working with a personal manager or booking firm.

The local Ft. Collins musician association tries to work within a non-union framework by focusing on education. However, the organization relies on, in the words of their president, Esther, “giving musicians education they need.” This education is characterized by “Professional Development” seminars, where the group brings in “panel participants” -- record producers, musicians, and music lawyers to teach musicians how to “make it” in the music industry. While these individuals do describe the very real challenges one must confront when trying to break into the larger music industry, they rely on using the banking model of education. The musicians’ association, through the panel participants, attempts to teach local musicians about the business, but in drawing “on the thematic content of their action from their own values and ideology (and) their

starting point is their own world (161). While these discussions are generative, there are more pressing local issues which these panels could address.

I have seen this type of pedagogy in the form of a collection of Ft. Collins musicians listening to speeches given by famous music lawyers and producers, where the panels seem more adept to “confronting culture itself” (161) by focusing on larger music industry matters while avoiding the sticky, uncomfortable issues surrounding local performance. However, at its most recent festival, the organization did make the important move of offering a panel discussion with representatives from many local venues, showing that the organization is committed to a more informed local scene. While the panel participants do attempt to “learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (161), real change in the community will require these types of *local* panels to occur more often, and musicians will need to engage in a critical discourse with those in positions of power on the panels. I believe that all involved: musicians, employers, and advocates will benefit from this type of critical dialogue.

Apart from education, the organization primarily stakes its reputation on an annual local music festival. The 2011 festival was hugely successful, with thousands of local music fans turning out to enjoy great local music. Most all of the 300 or so musical acts were great, the venues were prepared, and the fans were happy to pay the fifteen dollar cover charge, which offered entrance into over thirty local venues over the course of the weekend. Although the springtime festival offers an exciting opportunity for bands to play in front of audiences, promote themselves and network with each other, it finds the organization struggling to pay bands a decent wage. So what is a decent wage? Since music performance does not result in a regular exchange value, the parameters of a decent musician wage, in general, are hard to define. But from what older musicians have told me, a hundred dollars per musician was common in the 1970’s, a rate which is hard to come by today. Granted, technological and cultural changes influence this pay

decrease, but local musician organizations, acting as a middle man between musicians and clubs via the local festival, *could* use their position of authority in the community to make a huge statement about tangible economic support for musicians.

By not standing behind local professional musicians in their efforts to be included in the business of local music, the organization's festival really does nothing more than introduce music venues to many bands who are obviously willing to play for 100 dollars per band, which is the average that bands have made at past festivals. The organization only selects quality musical acts for its festival. Were the organization to pay each band a higher wage, one more reflective of how serious the organization takes local music, local venues would not only realize the real worth of quality local music, but they would come to understand that there is a group of concerned citizens in the community who are committed to local music. The Ft. Collins organization wishes to transform the community into a music scene like Austin, Texas, but without a solid economic local music base, such a transformation appears to serve the reputation of the organization itself rather than the actual community of musicians. And by not being active year round the organization fails to preserve the momentum generated by the festival throughout the rest of the year.

That being said, the organization is young and working with limited funds. But with a new central office, there is now a place for musicians to meet. Once it is staffed and regular office hours are determined, it should be highly beneficial to the community, as long as the group of friends who run the organization remain willing to make new connections with all members (social, cultural, economic, and class-based) of the Ft. Collins music community. To do this takes the initiative to meet new people and the organization cannot take on this task alone. As for myself, as one specific effort, I plan on compiling a list of all local Latino bands so that the few who are currently recognized do not have to be in the "World" music category in the organization's list of local bands

by genre. In this way, the organization can serve as an example to the rest of the city of the strength that a diverse local community affords. The local Ft. Collins has committed itself to bringing all local musicians together, and is on its way to making that a reality.

The new office is great development which will help bring all members of the local musician community together. As was mentioned earlier, the type of learning that musicians engage in together typically takes place in informal settings, such as in clubs, before or after performances, or at rehearsals. Basil longs for a local independent record store, “a physical place to go talk to people about local music. We don’t have that,” he says. Regardless of what form it takes, an educational program for musician empowerment would rely on the “framework of musical/extramusical connections which is tacit and internalized” (Levinson 26), but through dialogue can be accessed.

#### *Potential Directions for Critical Musical Discourse*

In order for these connections to be examined and understood as forces which arrange experience for musicians, such as “the built-in pervasive uncertainty of artistic undertakings and careers” (Menger 542), a critical discourse must take place. For possible prompts which may drive that critical discourse, I turn to Menger’s “Artistic Labor Markets and Careers” (1999), an article which explores many of the concerns alluded to in my interviews. First of all, we have bassist Mac’s concern that “we’ve been lucky to be able to do this as our full time job, but it’s harder these days.” Keith told me that if he is driving home from a gig, an hour away, having only made forty dollars, he asks himself if it is all really worth it. So how do we make the job of music more manageable? While discussions of industry record deals and contracts are important, it would also serve local musicians to discuss the ways in which “the definition of the artist as well as the orderly course of an artistic career appear today to be dependent variables in the process of how highly competitive and contestable labor and product markets, interacting or not with state and public intervention, operate and evolve” (Menger 544),

and how that affects our daily lives as we struggle to maintain gigs so that we can build an audience, while making sure to not be used as free or underpaid entertainment for local venues (or unfairly contractually obligated to record companies), all the while trying to maintain our identities as musicians.

Another area of inquiry as part of a music community literacy endeavor would be the fact that musicians “repeatedly cycle between several jobs (and) experience occupational and sectoral mobility and yet to continue to think of themselves as artists (544)...without stopping to produce art works” (545), where holding “other jobs outside one’s vocational field of activity corresponds to a better known scheme of occupational risk diversification, though the hackneyed examples of artists forced to hold down jobs totally unrelated to their art are partially misleading” (563). As Ft. Collins singer/songwriter Keith says, “I still can’t make a living at it.” Why do musicians continue to create even though they are not working as musicians? What happens if the musician stops producing musical works? What if that is all he or she does? A full exploration of how a musician maintains a “day gig” while playing music at night, and when and how to “make the jump” to full-time musician can be a generative discussion.

Another potential area of inquiry pertains to the way in which “competition cannot be separated from the individualistic search for systematic originality and innovation that has been characterizing the production of art since the nineteenth century, so that artists, like all other social actors, do not behave other than interdependently and competitively” (560). How does trying to create new music in light of the industry’s desire for “systematic originality” affect the musician’s identity? Menger also notes that “Individuation through creative work, which greatly accounts for the admiration of artists, requires that others have an interest in one’s work, and, consequently, that some competitive comparison occurs” (559). Although, as musician advocate Esther says, “To make it work take your ego out of it and put the better of the music community forward.”



So how can a music scene work together if music under late capitalism is an inherently competitive endeavor? According to Menger:

Talent should be considered not only as an exogenous factor of market success but also as an endogenous factor shaped by competition through innovation. The more competition raises the rate of innovation or, at least, of differentiation between prototype-like works, in exploiting and stimulating consumer demand for novelty, the more the sorting mechanism will be based on shifting specifications of marketable talent (571).

Menger is saying that talent is not based solely on individual musical capability. Is there a way to use this insight in such a way as to empower musicians without it being disaffective? How do “Innovations in artistic production, as a result of the interaction between new techniques, aesthetic shifts, and market transformations...tend to lower or to modify the usual skill requirements and/or the quantity of input factors in the production process” (567)? Dialogue about impact of the interaction between technology, music fans, and economics on the ways musicians make music could be highly productive, because after all, “It was professionalization by the market as the organizational form of artistic practices that made possible the triumph of creative individualism” (571). And lastly, how do we nurture the art of non-academic music performance in young musicians? As Basil told me, “youth in this city that care about music aren’t being afforded an opportunity to display it publicly.” What can communities do to foster young talent, and how can such development of talent lead to a community which not only values art, but the work that goes into art? Discourse around these prompts will foster the type of complex, co-created, ecological knowledge that will benefit musicians, regardless of whether or not they remain local or are lucky enough to get a chance to enter into negotiations with the wider music industry. Community

literacy, consisting of Freirean dialogue of problem solving centered on these issues can be beneficial to the local musician community.

#### *What We Can Learn from Punk's DIY Ideology*

Punk musicians found themselves in a unique place in history after the “rock ideology” had become corporatized, with The Who and Queen writing “rock operas” and Led Zeppelin traveling on their own plane. During the 1970's, punk musicians “exposed the complicity between rock and the music industry,” and in “exalting amateurism, they laid the foundation for a populist medium of cultural production in which passion, energy, and having something to say” (Moore 446) were important attributes of new music, instead of technical proficiency and studio wizardry.

The punk music of Black Flag, The Sex Pistols, and others was a rebellion against all forms of hegemony. Yet, from The Clash to Green Day, punk, like rock music, became part of the corporate music structure, and those who did not choose to become part of that structure formed independent music labels. While these “indie” labels quickly became a kind of farm system for the major music industry, the labels and musicians who were able to keep themselves in a position to both create and distribute new original music, yet still retain control over it, were the ones who realized that music is a business, and should be treated as such, if for no other reason than to protect the integrity of the music and the musicians who make it. It's ironic that punk, arguably the most anti-mainstream, rebellious, and “expressivist” of all American music turned out to be the perfect example of the life cycle of expressivism in music. Punk started as free expression, fell prey to that ideology, and learned from it, enabling the music to continue with its expressive nature, albeit one informed by an understanding of the socially constructed reality of music. This resulted in the formation of independent labels. Began by small blues, jazz, and rock labels of the 1950's, the practice of recording and releasing music “independently” of large music corporations was revisited by punk labels of the

mid- 1970's. "Indie" music continues today and allows many musicians the opportunity to record and release their music.

For many punk influenced musicians, who embrace the rebellious aspects of punk over its business savvy DIY element, a "career" in music may seem like a contradiction in terms. Just the thought of music as a job may elicit an affective response of distaste, evidenced in Basil's claim that "if you're trying to be a career musician you're going to look like an a--hole." If that is Basil's personal belief concerning music, who am I to argue? As the "30 year old female librarian" from my survey of music fans says:

Possible other reasons why musicians do what they do: love of music, love of instruments, love of performing, favor for a friend, pay the bills, meet girls/boys, annoy parents, make parents proud, avoid a "real" job, justify lifestyle, try new things, visit new places, get famous, meet famous people, get free stuff, prove high school bullies wrong...

I agree with some of these reasons; others make me squirm a little bit. But the librarian's point is well taken. There are many reasons why we play music, and if Basil wishes to play as a non-professional, then that is his right. However, it may serve Basil's best interests to, in the words of musician advocate Esther, "figure out what kind of band you're going to be." To be fair, Basil embraces all aspects of punk, not just the pared down anti-authority rhetoric, but also the "punk rock ethos, the DIY and all that stuff," as he says. But it would be useful for Basil and other musicians like him to decide on how long they want to adhere to those reified and socially constructed principles. Basil speaks fondly of the days when he and his friends threw house parties in order to perform their music, but these days Basil sometimes plays in bars, where he often "drives home empty handed." Like his acknowledgement that the possibility of getting a business loan for his own fledgling record label is a "real life business decision that I need to think about," deciding whether or not he wants to continue to "bypass the bar scene" or play shows at

bars will help him continue to create and perform efficiently. DIY means taking control over one's musical production, not adopting reified notions of the Romantic musician and dismissing the very real economy of music.

#### *Implications of Using the Autoethnographic Method*

In my interviews, and through my complete member research status and my commitment to theoretical analysis, I often felt as if I was interviewing myself. In this way, autoethnography helped me “convey (the) complexity and ambiguity” (Bresler as quoted in Bartleet and Ellis 8) that makes up the local professional music career. I became keenly aware of the fact that the only reason my music may be “authentic” is because the abundance of other musicians, and the way that the industry's focus on individual talent, sets the conditions of possibility for me to be able to call myself “authentic” or individual.” Everyone I interviewed seemed to have, or espouse, a sense that music is a personal activity, and I identified with most of what they had to say. Basil personified my resistance to conformity, Mac reminded me of myself in that he still has fun playing music, and I connected with Kate in that work ethic comprises a large part of both of our musical identities.

These characteristics are extra-musical; they correspond to *me*, not my music. My music is really just sounds I make with others, or sometimes by myself. Some conversations sound like music to me. Sometimes I even attempt to, in my head, transcribe dog or bird sounds into a melody, or develop a rhythmic pattern from footsteps or from the sounds of the chainsaw at my summer tree trimming job. I've always been fascinated by the way sounds make me feel, because to me, that is all music is--sound. It's amazing how when I'm fully comfortable and uninhibited by anyone or anything, I can pick up an instrument and play it and simply enjoy my physical reaction to the sounds—consciously keeping my mind from thinking about notes, scales, or chords. I

feel the same as DeChaine when he says that sounds “don’t *mean* anything to me, which is not to say they don’t affect me” (84).

This is why I think that an awareness of the socially constructed nature of music doesn’t mean we lose what we had: emotion, energy, feeling, and affect. These will always be an integral part of what I do while my eyes are closed on stage, or while I am composing or recording. In fact, I don’t see how they *could not* always be a part of what I do. As musical autoethnographer Chris McRae wrote, “Listening to music, like performing music, also changes bodies. It changes how we hear the world, and therefore it changes how we move through the world” (144). The argument that paying strict attention to these facets of a music career will decrease my amount of affective investment in music is similar to the common belief that studying a piece of literature will by definition ruin my enjoyment of it. Learning new concepts, studying, and researching in an academic setting does not blind me to any “real” knowledge existing “out there” in the world. And by learning new ways of thinking, I am not distancing myself from common sense “truth.” I don’t buy the argument that an awareness of the socially constructed aspects of music is dangerous to my love of music. If anything, taking care of myself, my financial situation, and my meaning-making potential actually puts me in a position to enjoy, create, and work within the imaginative, affective, and knowledge-producing realm (musical and academic) easier and more often.

This is where I see the theories of James Berlin having the most impact in my life and work. Without my research into expressivist and social-epistemic rhetoric, I may never have discovered and/or revisited Colebrook’s interpretation of Deleuzian philosophy, Williams’ critique, Hawk’s theories of invention, the affective approaches of Gould, or the literacy concepts of Freire. I made these inquiries after first applying Berlin’s theories, and then questioning, through critical study and application, the validity of his theories, and as a result I arrived at a place of great respect and admiration for the

man. His work functioned as a heuristic which enabled me to compose a thesis which looked critically at my music, my work, my scholarly endeavors, and—dare I say—my(self).

I will always play music because it makes me feel good, it is fun, and I learn a lot from it. But right now, in addition to being a rhetoric and composition scholar, I am a professional local musician, and even though my musical work makes me feel good, I know that there is another side to being a musician which involves the off-stage work as well as the on-stage labor of physically playing and singing, performing, connecting with other musicians and the audience. I owe much of my critical understanding of this work to my graduate study in rhetoric and composition.

As Esther says, “people get so tied up in their music emotionally that they can’t take a step back and look at the big picture.” I used this quote in the last chapter as an example of why an analysis of ideology is important for local professional musicians, but here I am using it to suggest the role of the activist rhetorician in terms of the ability to influence the ways that others not only communicate but also think about their relationship to others, to economies, and to the ethics around the production and consumption cycle of local music. Esther did not always say things like this. I have been using her insight in my autoethnographic work on a regular basis since this time last year, and back then she would have said how passionate she is about local music and how much it means to her. “The aim,” as Bartleet and Ellis say, “becomes to inspire others to critically reflect upon their own music experiences in relation to the autoethnographic tale being told” (9). So I consider my work with Esther to be an example of the transformative effect of autoethnography, not only for myself but for others.

As a result of my autoethnographic inquiry, Esther’s rhetoric about music production and circulation has changed. Esther’s quote represents her deepening understanding of her own participation in the whole local music enterprise, and I believe

that I had a part in that. Esther is coming to terms with her own emotional connection to the local music scene, and how her own passion for local music can be more than just a personal connection to the local scene; it can be used to help others see “the big picture.” Autoethnography helped me not only see the big picture, but the small picture as well; my personal connection to music. Two years ago, as I was planning to study music as an English grad student, I was hoping that my research would help me gain a more comprehensive understanding of music. It did that, but it also enabled me to respect music more.

I have a deeper appreciation for what it is that I do; not only as a musician, but also as a scholar. Combining the two has been nothing short of an adventure, at times exciting and at others tiring. It’s simply more fun to work on the boundaries of two discourse communities, and one feeling I never experienced throughout this process was boredom. Playing a gig and coming home at one in the morning and writing about it, and contextualizing that autobiographical writing within academic research made for a very satisfying feeling. And playing a gig and sharing what I had been writing about with my fellow musicians let me see a new dimension of my musical colleagues’ personalities; nearly every musician I shared my research with was supportive and interested. I gained respect from my colleagues because I was taking what *we* were doing seriously enough to write my Master’s thesis about it.

When this would happen, I definitely felt the autoethnographic challenge of being a complete member researcher. The term is almost a contradiction. How many complete members of a group actually make an effort to study it? One musician who I practiced a few of my interview questions on asked me, “Why are you doing this, man? You know about all this stuff!” It is true; I was familiar with the issues I raised to my friend, which is precisely why I needed to ask him those questions. For myself, as a musician, I feel that a failure to maximize the possibility of affect in music is reducing

my potential as a musician and the amount of creative work I can do. When I decide that I know everything there is to know about music, I am working exactly *against* what music is and does. Music is non-rational, and opinion is how we use reason to make decisions. For Deleuze, opinion is the direct linking of affect to the intelligible. When we feel something, we then use our capacity to reason to make sense of that feeling. We use language to invest ourselves in that feeling. We organize our lives around our investment in affect, and this leads to common sense extensive thinking. It is once these investments are overcoded by applying signifiers to them that we begin to assume that these affects and intensities represent some “pre-existing real” (Colebrook 108). Opinion, in this way, puts an end to thought and allows us to forget “the chants, rhythms and incantations of primitive cultures” (Colebrook 108). Opinion assumes that the world is “easily translatable into a common language we all share” (Colebrook 18). As Hill and Ploger notice:

Adults who are self involved or are not queued into paying attention to affect may not understand what an infant wants by its expressions and often end up blaming the infant for being irritating. This attitude is not dissimilar to how many classical musicians think about audiences. That is, if concert attendance is declining, they are too quick to blame listeners for their lack of interest in non-affective music making. This attitude is one to avoid like the plague. It accounts for why famous opera houses and many symphony orchestras are in financial insolvency (“On Affect”).

Such an attitude is also detrimental to local performing musicians of all genres. It shows how easily we can “read” the affective possibility of music as something concrete; a structure which we can rationally manage. Even Berlin’s taxonomy of the modes of rhetoric is an opinion about how people “read” the world and act on that reading in a rational sense. However, to overlook Berlin’s theories because they do not account for tacit bodily knowledge would be forming yet another opinion, and a damaging one at that. Berlin’s work provoked me to realize that if musicians want to be



able to continue to have the “musical” experience of creating, performing, collaborating and improvising, we should add to our arsenal of tools, and that involves an awareness of the social construction of music culture and the ideologies that go into it.

Autoethnography was my method for fostering that awareness without losing the affective dimension of my experience, because just as “the work of the musician is inherently corporeal, an autoethnographer also draws on and works from embodied knowledge and experiences” (Bartleet and Ellis 10). Both musicians and autoethnographers also emphasize performativity and ask the audience to engage them “on a number of different levels, from the intellectual to the embodied to the emotional” (10). In this way, autoethnography acts as a methodology of complexity which dissolves subject/object binaries. Autoethnographers engage in critical, vital, and affective work. Through autoethnography, I came to realize how close academic and non-academic knowledge really are to each other, I gained a new respect for the transformative power of music and language, and I arrived at a more comprehensive understanding of individuals as critical participants in cultural activity.

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APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM

## Consent to Participate in a Research Study

### Colorado State University

**TITLE OF STUDY:** An Autoethnography of Local Music Culture in Northern Colorado

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Sue Doe, English Department. Contact Information:  
Office phone--491-6839/Email—sue.doe.colostate.edu

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Joe Schicke, Colorado State University English Graduate Student. Contact Information: Phone—(901) 335-6803/ [Email—joeschicke@gmail.com](mailto:joeschicke@gmail.com)

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?** To support the ongoing efforts of the maintenance of a viable local music scene by people such as yourself, you are being invited to take part in this study.

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?** The study is being done by Joe Schicke, graduate student of Rhetoric and Composition at CSU, and is being overseen by Dr. Sue Doe, English Department.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?** In an effort to bridge scholarly theory in English composition studies and the real life conditions of working musicians in Northern Colorado, this study will use theories of composition in order to examine how and why local musicians take on careers in the music business. For this study, by obtaining perspectives of people like yourself on local music culture, we hope to improve working conditions of local musicians and others involved in the music business and inform composition theory from a unique perspective as well.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?** The study will be conducted in December of 2010 and January of 2011, and will take place at different locations selected by each interview participant. The time commitment for interview participants will be no longer than forty five minutes.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?** If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview at the time and location of your choosing within the specified time frame. You will be asked to select a pseudonym in order to protect your identity.

**ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?** We foresee no reasons why you should not take part in this study.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?** It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. This analysis will treat each interview participant anonymously. The researchers therefore state that there are no known risks associated with the procedures associated with this study.

Page 1 of 3 Participant's initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** There are no direct benefits from taking part in this study. However, you may be pleased to know that your participation may directly and positively influence research on the working conditions of those involved in local music culture. In particular, it is the hope of the researchers that this study will honor your contributions to the local music scene and educate a diverse audience about the important and culture-sustaining work you undertake when you create, record, and perform; and when you employ and/or organize musicians.

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?** We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, neither your name nor any other identifying information will be disclosed.

Further, we will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, you will be assigned a randomly selected letter for identification (for instance, the letter “A”) and the papers associated with you will be coded as follows: A1, A2, etc. No linkages will be made between your study identification (“A”) and your real identity as we are interested only in aggregate data, not individual performance.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?** The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigators, Dr. Sue Doe at [sue.doe@colostate.edu](mailto:sue.doe@colostate.edu) or Joe Schicke at [joeschicke@gmail.com](mailto:joeschicke@gmail.com). If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

*This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on \_\_\_\_\_.*

**WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?** The interview that will be conducted near the end of the study will require use of audio taping equipment. All audiotapes will be maintained in a locked file cabinet in Dr. Sue Doe's office during the course of the study and data analysis period. Tapes will be destroyed at the earliest date allowable by Institutional Review Board policy.



APPENDIX 2  
MUSICIAN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions for Musicians

- How long have you been playing professionally?
- What type of music do you play?
- What does it mean for you to be a musician? Is it a way to express yourself, make money, or both?
- Why is it important to you to be able to play not only other people's music, but also original music at your gigs?
- Describe your interaction with different local music organizations, such as the Colorado Music Business Organization, the Denver Musicians Association, the Ft. Collins Musicians Association, etc. Do you find these groups effective in helping musicians in their careers? How could they be more effective?
- What measures do you take in order for others to take you and your music career seriously?
- In what ways do you see venue owners taking advantage of musicians, and in what ways do you see owners treating musicians fairly?
- How do you think wider forces, such as the music industry and media, affect the amount of and quality of gigs you get?
- Why is it important to you to be able to play not only other people's music, but also original music at your gigs?
- How does technology and the internet figure into your music career?
- How do you feel about the practice of *undercutting*? What do you think drives one musician to undercut another?
- Would you take a paying gig if the employer specified that you could play cover songs only?

APPENDIX 3  
MUSICIAN EMPLOYER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



### **Interview Questions for Musician Employers**

- How long has your venue been open?
- Were you ever a working musician?
- What do you think the role of a local music venue should be as a part of a local music community?
- How do musicians contribute to your bottom line?
- To what extent do you see yourself as an advocate for local working musicians? How is your advocacy enacted?
- With respect to the musicians who perform at your venue, what makes patrons choose your venue over others when they go out to listen to music?
- How does technology and the internet figure into your role in the local music scene?
- How do your patrons' react when you charge a cover at the door, and what can musicians do to make that cover charge worthwhile?
- Would you rather hire a cover band or an original band? What are your thoughts on acts that bring both originals and covers together?
- What can local musicians do for themselves in order to foster an economically thriving local music community?
- What are some of the pressure that you are under that others might not know about?

APPENDIX 4

MUSICIAN ADVOCATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### **Interview Questions for Musician Advocates**

- How long has your group been around?
- What is the organizational structure of your group?
- To what extent do you see yourself as an advocate for local working musicians? How is your advocacy enacted?
- Do musicians need to make certain compromises in order to be artistically and economically successful? If so, what are these compromises?
- How would you like to help bring the local music community together? What is stopping you from doing that?
- How does technology and the internet figure into what your organization does?
- How does education play into what your group does? How do you educate the local musician community, and what are the key areas of that education?

APPENDIX 5

MUSIC FAN SURVEY QUESTIONS

## Music Fan Survey Questions

Respondents checked boxes as responses to the following statements, and respondents were also given the chance to comment on these statements. All of the material used in this thesis came from those comments.

*strongly disagree/disagree/neutral/agree/strongly agree*

-I believe that musicians should get paid a fair wage for performing.

-I think it is right to charge a cover at the door if that money goes to the musicians.

-I think some of the money collected by cover charges at the door should go to the bar, club or music venue.

-I think that the drinks I buy at live performances are all I should have to pay for.

-I think that musicians perform mainly because it makes them feel good.

-Musicians do what they do because it is who they are, and they will do anything to be able to play music.

-Musicians do what they do because they have to pay the bills.

-I am happy to pay a door charge for musical acts that seem to work hard at anticipating the audience's entertainment needs and desires.

-I am happy to pay a door charge for musical acts that don't seem to worry about what others think and play music that satisfies the performers' artistic needs.

-Please include your age, sex, how many music events you attend a month, if you are a musician or not, and what you do for a living.