Building Subcultural Community Online and Off: An Ethnographic Analysis of the CBLocals Music Scene

Bryce James McNeil

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BUILDING SUBCULTURAL COMMUNITY ONLINE AND OFF:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE CBLOCALS MUSIC SCENE

by

BRYCE J. MCNEIL

Under the Direction of Ted Friedman

ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to music scene and online community studies. It is an historical examination of the CBLocals music scene in the summer of 2006. This scene is located in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada, and the website with which its participants identify. This study analyzes the CBLocals website as a cultural infrastructure of a music scene and thus positions itself to advance pre-Internet arguments about scenes.

This dissertation argues that on the one hand, the Internet changes how music scenes function by increasing accessibility and mobility. On the other hand, it has left the social composition and ideological outlook of music scenes unchanged. Users celebrate the medium's possibilities and what the CBLocals website has brought to their scene. They also feel nostalgia for the practices they feel their scene has lost along the way. The result is that the most
significant consequence of CBLocals.com and the Internet on the music scene is a feeling of ambivalence in its participants.

In the second and third chapter, I demonstrate how local context still greatly affects the representation of the CBLocals scene. In Chapter Two, I analyze the social composition of CBLocals based on race, gender, region, class, sexuality and age. I conclude that this social composition is unaffected by technological advances. In Chapter Three, I analyze discussions of "selling out" within the scene. I conclude that regional perspectives of state-supported professionalism in music and arts inform discussions on "selling out" that are specific to the CBLocals community.

The fourth chapter explores the CBLocals users' perceptions of the website and messageboard. Users celebrate a variety of benefits, such as an interactive forum, the social lubrication provided by online gossip and the ease of promoting music online. However, many users dislike what they see as the erosion of work ethic and standards of discourse that have occurred in the Internet age. These mixed emotions reflect the ambivalence resulting from the celebration of possibilities and the nostalgia emergent with new technology.

INDEX WORDS: Music scenes, Local, Glocal, Online community, Subculture, Authenticity, Professionalism, Amateurism, Social groups, Internet, Fandom, Identity
BUILDING SUBCULTURAL COMMUNITY ONLINE AND OFF:
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by

BRYCE J. MCNEIL

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Jim and Orella McNeil

In Memory of Emma Locke, 1979-2009.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For many, it is inevitable to unintentionally exclude significant figures in their acknowledgements. It was a lengthy task to complete this dissertation—literally and figuratively—and there is no small number of people that played in a role in supporting me. Do know, while you read this, there are other important names besides those you see here.

In my very first class with Ted Friedman, I learned of his description of electronic folk culture as a counter to commodified conceptions of music. I had similar thoughts but he had articulated them in concise theoretical form. I wanted to do the same and my journey into cultural studies began. When I was too quick to a conclusion, Ted replied with his dreaded "I just want to push you a little further…," a sign he was not going to let my ideas remain undeveloped. When I was too long-winded, he interrupted with a blunt "tell me in a sentence what you're trying to say." I am also happy to say that I did not just find an advisor but a friend in Ted. As quick as he could point me to five different references in one sentence, he could also de-stress me by relating the virtues of Hall & Oates or how he related to baseball differently in the 2000s than in the 1990s. I appreciated those moments of zen amidst a whirlwind of theory.

I am grateful to my entire committee. Whatever I learned about ethnography, I owe to Emanuela Guano. She was exceptionally patient in dealing with an amateur in her field. I appreciated that she was boldly presented both the good and the bad of the ethnographic world so that I understood which roads not to take. I have seen few people who express the sheer delight of a great idea that Kathy Fuller-Seely does. At the times when I was feeling particularly flummoxed with the life of a graduate student, her optimism at the slightest bit of my progress convinced me I would finish. Jonathan Sterne provided me with illuminating perspective on labor and technology in music that I had not considered. I joked upon first meeting him as a
conference respondent that this "Canadian in America appreciates the feedback of an American in Canada." It holds true today. Finally, I owe Alisa Perren thanks for stepping in at a crucial juncture of the dissertation where, as they say, "life happened" and I needed a new contributor and a new perspective. She did so admirably.

I also thank Anna Szemere, who during her time at Emory provided me with a valuable survey of music scene studies and whose work provided a great inspiration. Greg Lisby, Merrill Morris, Michael Bruner and Greg Smith were all valuable contributors in the early stages of my academic life at Georgia State. I also cannot forget various members of GSU staff that were there to help keep the computers and paperwork rolling along the way, including Gary Fessenden, Lyshandra Holmes, Carmella Pattillo, Roland Stewart and Tawanna Tookes.

Celeste Sulliman set my life on a new course in 1996. She recommended I pursue Communication Studies at Cape Breton University. 10 years later, she was of invaluable assistance in developing my protocol. Judy Rolls gave me with the single best piece of scholarly advice I have ever received ("just write it!") and she provides wise counsel to this day. Carol Corbin, Tanya Brann-Barrett and Michael MacDonald also helped to make my time at CBU an instructive experience that encouraged me to pursue my academic path. I also acknowledge my M.A. chair Sandra Berkowitz and the entire Communication department of the University of Maine. I grew as a person and student during my time in Orono and for that I thank them.

In his 2006 Acknowledgements, Joe Valenzano wrote of our friendship that dates back to my time in Maine: "there is nothing more encouraging when you are down than the sight of a familiar face." He puts it better than I ever could. Joe helped me out in so many ways that I would run out of fingers counting them. I am glad that we were able to go down the road to a degree together not once, but twice.
Danielle Williams deserves all the credit in the world for picking me up and forcing me to sprint when I was dragging my heels to the finish line. She cracked the whip on my writing schedule when it was desperately needed. Shane Toepfer is a great friend and peer and for as long as we can analyze wrestling and talk about football, it will remain that way. I also enjoyed the company and advice of Jason Edwards, whose hilarious arguments with Joe down the hall from my office provided me with levity in the midst of grading and dissertation madness.

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I developed a working relationship with the Student Activities department through my involvement with WRAS. Everyone in the department was very supportive as I worked into the night hours after the 9-5 to get this done. What can I say about WRAS? — except that it completely saved my life in Atlanta. It was my refuge when I needed a break from being "Bryce the Grad Student." Left of the Dial, Right on the Music and the radio station I carry as a badge of honor where ever I go.

It was through WRAS that I started my relationship with Zanna Huff. Through time and individual tribulations, we developed this relationship into a source of continued happiness. Zanna, I love you and consider you to be the final piece of the puzzle of my life in Atlanta and the final spark I needed to go all the way. Where we will go next, I do not know, but as long as we are together, I will treasure every moment.
My family, both the McNeils and the Whites, have been completely supportive from the beginning to the end of my studies. Specifically, my siblings have been there every step of the way. Jeannine, thanks for putting me up every single time I came through Halifax for a trip home. Patrick, thanks for staying up late to watch TV and veg every single time I tried to milk every last second out of those trips. My brother and sister are my best friends in life and this is a great privilege.

As the son of two people involved in education, I knew from an early age that they would vigorously support me in any postsecondary pursuits. They did so much emotionally, practically and financially to set me up to succeed. This degree is just one example of everything that they worked towards as parents. I made the degree happen, but it never would have happened if they had not created the opportunity.

At long last, none of what you are about to read would be possible without the participation and support of those within the CBLocals community. They were eager, insightful, forthright and their story was a worthy one to tell. Wherever I go, a little part of me will always be the high school student going to his first all-local show in a rec hall and the CBLocals website and scene will always be with him.
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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO CBLOCALS

CBLocals (www.cblocals.com) is a website for a music scene located primarily in the industrial area of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. The scene of predominantly rock music has existed in the area since the early 1990s. Website owner Harry Doyle founded the CBLocals website in 1997. The website provides users with an events calendar, details on upcoming shows and reviews of past shows. The most used feature on the website is the CBLocals messageboard, in which 15-20 threads are updated daily by the userbase.

This dissertation is an historical analysis of the state of the CBLocals scene in 2006. It contributes to both the fields of online community studies and to music scene studies. The dissertation argues that on the one hand, the Internet changes how music scenes function by increasing accessibility of communication and the mobility of membership. On the other hand, it has left the social composition and ideological outlook of music scenes unchanged. The resulting feeling of community participants is that of ambivalence—celebration of the medium's possibilities and nostalgia for the practices lost along the way.

Many landmark studies (Straw, 1991, Shank, 1994, Thornton, 1997, Forman, 2002) contribute to our understanding that music scenes are communities that gradually develop in specific spaces which become sites of resistance to mainstream culture, but also become abstracted into commercialized imaginaries of regions. Straw establishes the term "scene" to refer to specific spaces in which musicians establish shared practices. Shank argues that musicians create new and different scenes within the same geographic space over time. Thornton analyzes English rave scenes and how they function as a subculture to the mass produced commercial music of England. Forman focuses on "scene" as a commercial device in
and of itself, describing it as a way of developing a commodity fetish for music from certain areas of the world.

Online and offline interaction now intertwine to form the contemporary reality of music scenes. This study builds on these findings to reflect this current reality of integrated communities. The Internet has presented musicians with more communication opportunities than ever before. They can now promote beyond television and radio; sometimes making songs and entire albums available for free download. Nielsen Soundscan reports that the billionth mp3 purchase occurred in 2008, with a 27% gain in online sales from 2007 to 2008, whereas CD sales declined for the seventh out of eight years (Chmielewski, 2009). As the sales and promotion of music have moved online, so too have music scenes, shifting their primary mode of documentation from print zines to online forums. The website Stillpost.ca lists 28 forum sites that are exclusively devoted to regionally-specific music scenes in Canada.

My dissertation a specific moment in time in which the online and offline components of the CBLocals scene had integrated and therefore makes arguments that prior studies were not in a position to make. It analyzes the current cultural infrastructure of music scenes wherein the expanse of people one can connect within seconds is much wider than ever before. The implications are scenes range from modes of promotional practice to an increase in music forums removed from local specificity. Yet the physical location of CBLocals and its sociopolitical realities still matter, and they still influence the scene. This dissertation acknowledges compositional factors in music scenes that this shift in medium does not alter.

TABLE 1.1 provides a brief overview of significant areas of change and stability within the CBLocals scene since the CBLocals website began in 1997 to the time of my fieldwork in
## TABLE 1.1: Change and Stability in CBLocals 1997-2006

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<th>CHANGED</th>
<th>UNCHANGED</th>
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<td>ACCESSIBILITY</td>
<td>Users can access the scene more readily by becoming an active participant through the website's forum. Interviewees identified some people within the scene solely based on their contributions to the messageboard.</td>
<td>The scene remains typical of the majority indie rock scenes in that participants are primarily white and middle-class, with men comprising a strong majority of the participants. In Chapter 2, I discuss social composition in the CBLocals community and how it remains unaffected due to the website's presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCALITY</td>
<td>Expatriates and a handful of non-Cape Bretoners are more visible in day-to-day discussions of the scene. Several of my interviewees no longer lived in the Cape Breton area but visited and/or contributed to the CBLocals forum on a regular basis. However, users can also turn to commercial websites such as MySpace for a geographically non-specific scene.</td>
<td>Issues of &quot;selling out&quot; are still framed in a local (as well as national and provincial) context of state-supported professionalism. In Chapter 3, I detail how local relationships with the provincial and federal government shape understandings of commercialism within the scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>Users can make a greater number of people aware of shows with a click of a button. The website and messageboard were identified as the primary methods of promoting shows. Users can make their music available to a wider audience in a short amount of time by posting MP3s.</td>
<td>Although there is debate about whether or not the Internet exacerbates it, everyone agrees that the Internet has not resolved disagreements between scene participants on matters of aesthetics, business or community. Dissatisfaction with hierarchies within subcultures remains apparent.</td>
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2006. The changes have largely been functional (how things are done, how people can access information), whereas significant structural and social patterns (hierarchies, cultural makeup) that have underwritten the scene remain unchallenged. The resulting ambiguity of the userbase towards the results of the CBLocals website reflects a specific transitional time in the young scene: caught between a first and second generation and between old ways and the new way.

This chapter introduces the CBLocals scene and describes how it functions as a unique indie rock scene in the context of its geographical placement—Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. I provide an overview of music scene and online community studies and discuss how this dissertation contributes to each field. The chapter provides a discussion and justification of the ethnographic methodology used to supply the data for this dissertation. I conclude with a layout and summary of the chapters that follow.

**CBLOCALS: A WEBSITE, A MUSIC SCENE**

I use the term “CBLocals music scene” throughout this work to refer to a specific community of people attending, staging or playing variants of popular music, mostly rock, within the industrial area of Cape Breton. Although the industrial area encompasses a wide number of urban communities, Sydney is the central location of CBLocals activity. As such, this dissertation frequently refers to "Sydney" as a manner of referring to the center of the scene. However, the dissertation will also occasionally refer either to the municipal area of Cape Breton as a whole or to outlying areas, such as Glace Bay or Sydney River. This should not confuse the reader into believing that the author is referring to different communities, but rather simply specifying locales to explain certain events.

I refer specifically to the scene as it existed up until 2006, although some of the scene's characteristics remain unchanged in 2009. I occasionally retreat into present tense to describe
more historically consistent traits of the scene, but I appreciate that all conditions of the scene are fluid and subject to change. This dissertation reflects a specific popular moment for the CBLocals website—when it averaged approximately 10,000 unique visitors monthly—as well as a specific moment in the scene's history where two generations were clearly separated into seemingly two different scenes.

People within the CBLocals scene attend music events advertised and discussed on the CBLocals website or messageboard. The website is listed as a part of the Locals.ca family of websites. Locals.ca is an Internet development company based out of Cape Breton and Halifax. Its four listed participants online are Harry Doyle in Sydney and Mike Slaven, Sean MacGillvary and Marc Musial in Halifax. The profile on the main website of this development company has not been updated for several years, which would lead one to believe the organization is inactive. They have not undertaken any new web projects but they maintain registry over the domain names of the Locals sites, two Cape Breton politicians' sites and the Celtic Colours music festival website.

Within the scene, the website is universally recognized as the project of Harry Doyle, a Cape Breton musician and web designer. He founded the website in 1997 and owns both the CBLocals Internet Domain Name and the web server that contains all of the content for the CBLocals website. He pays for the entire enterprise out of pocket. Doyle grants moderation privileges on the forum and administrative functions on the website itself. Harry has owned the domain name (or Uniform Resource Locator (URL)) “CBLocals.com” since July 14, 1998. It is registered through the technology company Networks Solutions, LLC, based in Herndon, Virginia. Doyle hosts the servers and periodically suspends the website and messageboard’s
activity to re-load material to new servers. The CBLocals website is independently owned and free of any paid advertisements or content, indicative of the philosophy of its founder.

Doyle, a skateboarder, musician and computer technician, founded the website to bring all three of his interests together. The website initially served as a direction to Internet Relay Chat (IRC) conversations, a listing for skateboarding gatherings and a concert/events listings page. It is now primarily used as a listings page and a separate page is featured for skateboarders (skate.cblocals.com). The website’s guestbook was a forum of interaction by frequent visitors, but stopped in 2002 in favor of a .php messageboard system.

The “Locals” website concept has since expanded across Atlantic Canada (HalifaxLocals, NFLocals, PEILocals and MonctonLocals). Members who reside in the locations specified in the URL titles are responsible for the content of the respective websites and for the moderations of the messageboards. Once an Internet user registers to post a message on a Locals messageboard, the privilege is granted for any messageboard within the Locals system. Hence, a CBLocals user is free to post on the MonctonLocals forum and vice-versa, if s/he so chooses. Doyle maintains ownership of all of the Locals websites and forums, although he keeps his participation with the other sites and messageboards to a minimum.

The CBLocals music scene itself is most succinctly described as an indie rock scene, although this term is complicated, as I detail in this dissertation. Members of the community that specifically use the terms “CBLocals scene” or “locals scene” agree that what differentiates the CBLocals scene from the Cape Breton music scene as a whole is that the latter places a greater emphasis on Celtic music. The mainstream Cape Breton music scene is widely recognized across the Maritimes region as predominantly Celtic and traditional. The genres of music played by bands advertised and discussed on CBLocals are primarily guitar-based rock bands, although
hip-hop and electronic music is occasionally featured. The age group of bands and attendees ranges from 14-35 years of age with a few exceptions on either side of this range.

The scene dates back to the early 1990s although I could locate no specific genesis. Whatever rock music that had been played in the Cape Breton area prior to the 1990s was unknown by the vast majority of my interviewees. A handful cited acts such as Phycus, Matt Minglewood and Buddy and the Boys. The only link between these acts and the scene of 2006 was the performer Art Damage, who had performed with Phycus in the 1980s and early 1990s. The CBLocals scene practices, or may even be the result of, a cultural amnesia surrounding rock music in the area. There is no documentation of any sort of zine culture that may have existed prior to the 1990s. To most of the people I interviewed (in fact, to everyone under the age of 25), it was as if there was never a scene until the 1990s came along.

It is generally agreed upon by users born before or during 1981 that the scene predates the CBLocals website. During the early 1990s, a group of bands began to play alternative rock, punk and metal music, much of it like that of the popular music from Seattle, Washington (Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and so forth). At this time, the primary base of musicians consisted of teenagers or those in their early 20s. The scene eventually grew to incorporate other variants of rock music such as punk, math rock, jazz-rock and funk. Some events were established in the 1990s that have provided continuity in the scene over time, specifically Gobblefest (held during Canadian Thanksgiving weekend) and Stoked For the Holidays (held near Christmas time).

The CBLocals scene features both “all-ages shows” as well as “bar shows.” All-ages shows (or “AA shows”) are events in which anyone can be admitted. The target audience for these shows is teenagers that are legally not to be admitted to bar shows. During my study,
attendees over the age of 19 at AA shows were sparse. Bar shows are events held at licensed drinking establishments in which only those 19 years or older (legal drinking age in Nova Scotia) are allowed to attend. It bears mentioning that, as in most young drinking cultures, some participants under 19 do manage to get inside on occasion. Both AA and bar shows receive discussion on CBLocals, although this dissertation charts a significant divide between the audiences each type of show attracted during my research.

I clarify that this study is a reflection of a specific moment of time in the CBLocals scene, namely the summer of 2006. This chapter details my ethnographic procedure, which concentrated my fieldwork during this period of time. However, as a native of the Cape Breton area, I did this research with a working knowledge of history of the scene and with a rudimentary knowledge of activity that occurred since. There are qualities to the scene that are specific to the time period discussed and other trends that have been consistent over a longer period of time. In instances where my observations were reflective of a trend more specific to the timeframe, I have noted it in this dissertation.

Bands prominently featured in the all-ages scene in the summer of 2006 included Drowning Shakespeare (emo/screamo), Richmond Hill (pop punk/emo), Erosion (pop rock), Athymia (heavy metal) and Violent Theory (punk/metal). All-ages shows usually occurred at fire and church halls for 50-200 people, mostly teenagers. Bands frequently featured at bar shows included Tom Fun Orchestra (roots rock), Slowcoaster (funk rock), Airport (pop/rock) and the Roots and Rhythm Remain (instrumental rock). Bar shows occurred at licensed establishments in the Sydney area such as Bunker's, The Upstairs, Daniel’s or Smooth Herman’s. A business collective known as “House of Rock” (HOR) included Tom Fun, Slowcoaster, Rock Ranger and Carmen Townsend.
The CBLocals website featured a sidebar on its front pages which detailed music events taking place in Sydney and other municipal areas of Cape Breton. Other areas that prominently featured shows were Glace Bay and Sydney River. I found that users did not use the website much beyond finding out show dates and locations. Much of the online activity to which this dissertation refers occurred on the CBLocals messageboard, which underwent a change of moderation in May 2006. The new moderator, poorhaus, sought to eliminate use of homophobic and incendiary language and to refocus discussion on constructive discussion of music-related topics. These measures were subject to much discussion on and off the messageboard.

I discuss the methodology in specifics later in this chapter. The following section details the motivation behind studying this specific scene. Of course, there is no denying the advantage of proximity and familiarity when choosing the CBLocals scene as an area of study. Yet there are other reasons why the CBLocals scene is a salient subject to choose in order to make a significant argument that contributes to both online community and music scene studies.

**Why CBLocals?**

This dissertation positions CBLocals in two significant ongoing discussions about online communities and music scenes, respectively. First, from observing CBLocals, we see both utopian and dystopian visions of community, producing ambivalence towards the Internet and its perceived effect on community. Second, this scene reflects the new reality of intertwined online and offline community in locally based music scenes. Locality still matters, although the outreach that new media provides is undeniable.

Online community studies have developed from Howard Rheingold’s (1996) discussion about the significance of online forums as valid forms of community. His positing of online community as a path to a newer, stronger community argued against the dystopian visions of
new media from Tönnies (1964) and Postman (1984). This polarized discussion does not fully capture the sense of ambivalence that a significant number of Internet users feel about the medium.

Howard Rheingold’s *The Virtual Community* (1996) began the theoretical debate on the effect of the Internet on identity and community. Rheingold states: “when such (a) group accumulates a sufficient number of friendships and rivalries, and witnesses the births, marriages, and deaths that bond any other kind of community, it takes on a definite and profound sense of place in people’s minds” (p. 420). He cites such instances that occurred in the formation of the online community “The WELL.” Such events, he argues, transcend people merely doing things simultaneously but rather doing them *together*, forming personal bonds that encourage the group to act for the betterment of the whole.

The CBLocals website and messageboard has commonalities and differences with this website. The WELL is based out of San Francisco, CA, but has a wide outreach of users. CBLocals also has an outreach of users beyond Cape Breton, but few of the participants have not lived in Cape Breton at some point in their lives. Furthermore, the explicit purpose of the CBLocals website is to foster activity within a specific locality. However, like the WELL, CBLocals has a profound sense of place in people’s minds. Users have grown up with the website and witnessed the same series of events that Rheingold cites within the WELL community. Rheingold argues that this is proof that significant personal bonds can be formed through gatherings on the Internet and, furthermore, suggests that the Internet could overcome hurdles of prior generations such as distances and class differences.

His perspective counters those that treat media developments as nothing more than advancements from the culture industry to remove people from community (Tönnies, 1964,
Postman, 1985). In *Habits of the Heart* (1985), Robert Bellah et. al. (1985) call upon us to “rebuild the social commons.” The authors suggest citizens lose value in their lives by placing individual interests over those of various communal ties. These ties are reminders that the stubborn pursuit of individual goals sometimes risks smiting the interdependence that brings people closer together. Reminded thusly, the book maintains, citizens remain motivated to keep the community together as they realize it is in both the individual and group’s interest: “Public life is built upon the second languages and practices of commitment that shape character. These languages and practices establish a web of interconnection…making each individual aware of his reliance on the larger society” (p. 251).

Quentin Schultze’s (2002) *Habits of the High Tech Heart* puts forth the argument that the Internet accelerates many of the vices that Bellah et. al. lament in their original work. Schultze argues the lofty goal of communitarianism is sacrificed for the pursuit of goals that are easily satisfied in the short-term. Schultze argues the Internet provides too much information and too many avenues for distraction. It gives people the impression that life should be fast and easy, whereas community is not.

However, not all scholarship concurs that the Internet has such an overwhelming effect on communities. Robert Putnam's (2000) evaluation of the Internet's role on community demonstrates that, at the very least, significant declines in community activity predate the Internet ergo absolving it as the cause. In his assessment of declining community and social connectedness, Putnam finds that 10% of Americans were connected to the Internet by 1996. He claims the trends that worry him—declining affiliations, memberships, altruism and civic participation among other social structures—far predate this coming to pass. “The timing of the Internet explosion means that it cannot possibly be causally linked to the crumbling of social
connectedness…it may be part of the solution…it may exacerbate it, but the cyberrevolution was not the cause" (p. 170).

Scholars are still assessing the positive and negative effects, as well as the non-effects, that the Internet and new technology are having on community development. Despite Putnam's conclusions, there is no denying that people still rally to technologically determinist notions that the Internet has been exceptionally influential on community development, either for good or for bad. My interviewees, during the course of this dissertation, will be quoted multiple times expounding on the overwhelming effect they perceive CBLocals and the Internet having on the scene. This dissertation reaches a decidedly different conclusion. Examining how the scene functions in Chapters Two, Three and Four, I argue that many of the qualities typifying indie rock scenes that are present in the CBLocals scene remain unchanged despite the Internet's presence.

It is incumbent upon my ethnographic methodology to present how the users perceive the situation, even as my argument differs. What my survey will demonstrate is that we are left with both Rheingold’s and Postman’s perspectives of new media taking hold among its users. Hence, this study is in a position of teaching us how users are wrestling with conflicted feelings about what the Internet has brought.

The “pre-modern” society for which the Habits authors yearn is often exemplified in postmodern culture by music scenes. I use the term “music scene” to refer to the community that a) provides the infrastructure for a community of musicians, artists and music fans and b) articulates a difference between itself and others engaged in creative activity within the same geographical area. They are a powerful form of community because they play a crucial role in identity formation. Barry Shank (1994) describes his experience as a musician in Austin, Texas
which is the basis for *Dissonant Identities*: “Through that process, my tastes changed, my desires and interests changed, quite subjective feelings of pleasure, belonging, loyalty, along with jealousy, frustration and envy changed, and thus, my identity changed with them” (p. xi).

For Shank, the sense of self is directly tied to the scene so strongly that he cannot ignore it. The personal anecdote is very representative of findings of a variety of music scenes (Gaines, 1991, Leblanc, 1999, Azerrad, 2001, Bennett & Peterson, 2004). In fact, it is rare to discover a study of a music scene through which the author(s) has not already developed a significant portion of his or her identity.

Will Straw (1991) introduces the term “scene” to popular music and cultural studies. He defines it as “that cultural space in which a range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation” (p. 373). This space allows for creativity from many individuals but relies on the recognition of interdependence from participants. This is what Alan O’Connor (2002) refers to as an emphasis on practical concerns in punk scenes: “the active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity…finding places to play, building a supportive audience, developing strategies for living cheaply, shared punk houses, and so forth” (p. 226).

Although Straw differentiates music scenes from music communities, I argue his conception of scene is actually quite communitarian. When a group of people share commonalities like geography or age, it reflects no effort and does not detract from an individualized pursuit of culture and identity. When musicians and music fans create a “scene,” they are striving to create a “space” that is based on common desire, not obligation. I therefore use music scenes generally and the CBLocals scene specifically to discuss community and how it is changed (for better or for worse) by an online component. It actually merges much of the
obligatory elements of strictly defined geographical community (it centers on industrial Cape Breton) with the desirous elements not linked to geography (interests in certain music genres and art).

Before the development of the Internet and its emergence as a popular medium, music scene scholars universally understood music scenes by studying musical practices at shows and social gatherings within specific locations. Brian Wilson and Michael Atkinson (2005) suggest that current ethnographic case studies of geographical areas and websites are in a position to develop contemporary arguments about music scenes. They argue that “the Internet is a part of everyday life, and not necessarily abstracted from it” (p. 283) and as such, suggest that scholars avoid separating their online and offline ethnographies.

For scholars such as Shank and Gaines, there was no "online" to examine. Contemporary scholars such as Lysloff (2003) and Lee and Peterson (2004) have conducted ethnographies of what they define as "Internet music scenes"—that is, they treat the focus scenes of their study as entities contained entirely online. These studies are useful in understanding the historical development of scenes and also for demonstrating how scenes develop absent from locale, but neither assist us in updating our understanding of regionally-based music scenes.

The findings of Shank, Azerrad, Straw and Gaines are in need of an update to more accurately portray how scenes currently function. CBLocals moves us beyond questions of “how do websites and forums function ‘just like real life?’” It is particularly ideal as it is a music scene that pre-dates its online gathering location. Although it gives the scene an identifying moniker, the reality is that the CBLocals website and messageboard are actually continuations of the community that preceded it. As per Wilson and Atkinson’s call, we discover how online participation is incorporated into a pre-existing offline community.
Additionally, CBLocals provides a more quotidian example of locality in music scenes not often found in current literature. Many recollections of music scenes from both scholars and the masses center on large urban centers. The aforementioned studies are examples of this, based in cities such as Austin, Atlanta and Montreal. Music communities stemming from or near Athens, Minneapolis, Boston and Washington are given prominence in music scene narrative due to the prolific number of nationally recognized bands that emerged from them (Azerrad, 2001).

Yet for every Athens, Georgia, there are hundreds of small communities such as industrial Cape Breton. Today, hundreds upon hundreds of bands play to small local audiences and will never be heard by a mass audience, Internet exposure notwithstanding. (This is actually as true of urban areas as well although these bands at least possess greater proximity to national media). These examples bear further analysis as there is much to learn from how people develop music scenes without the amenities granted by urban locations. This is especially important in how participants of music scenes articulate a sense of, alternately, pride and disappointment in the music scenes that they feel helps to define them. As the following section demonstrates, these smaller locales may be possessed of a cultural history that places a rock scene in distinct opposition to its locale's musical history and popular representation.

SITUATING CAPE BRETON

Cape Breton Island is part of Canada’s Atlantic coast, nestled between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean. The Strait of Canso is the narrow 27 km/17 mile long body of water that both connects the gulf and ocean as well as separates Cape Breton from the rest of the province of Nova Scotia. This divide is resolved by the Canso Causeway— a rock filled causeway of approximately 1385 meters/1515 yards that ends in a 94-meter/103 yard swing
bridge. The island measures approximately 10,311 square km/3980 square miles (Hornsby, 1992).

The physical linking between Cape Breton Island and the rest of Nova Scotia is historically recent. On August 13, 1955, the Canso Causeway was opened; thus eliminating the necessity of ferrying from the island to the mainland (Lewendowski, 1980). Nonetheless, the original physical disconnect is still a visible part of the mentality as Cape Bretoners commonly refer to the rest of the province as the “mainland,” distinguishing themselves from the rest of Nova Scotia.

Cape Breton was the most eastern location in Canada until the islands of Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation in 1949. The “industrial area” is officially referred to as the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) as of August 1, 1995 (http://www.cbrm.ns.ca/). This primarily consists of Sydney, Glace Bay, New Waterford, North Sydney, Sydney Mines and Louisbourg. The population of the CBRM according to the 2006 Canada Census is 102,250 people, a 3.5% drop from the 2001 census and a 9.1% drop from 1996. The population is dispersed across approximately 2,500 square kilometres. The "center," if one exists aside from the geographical reality, is the former city of Sydney, with a population of 24,111 (7.6% drop from 2001 census). The populations of the remaining merged towns range from 1,500 to 16,000 people.

Gaelic culture is a strong part of Cape Breton’s image and the area is renowned for Celtic music. However, the use of the Gaelic language has gradually eroded to where only a small number of elders speak it as a first language today. St. Ann’s, Cape Breton (approximately 60km/37m from Sydney) remains home to the College of Celtic Arts and Crafts established in 1938. This is often referred to simply as "the Gaelic college." The Gaelic identity is a source of
much discussion and sometimes provides disconnect between CBLocals and mainstream Cape Breton culture.

Industrial Cape Breton is continually referred to as “economically underdeveloped,” alluding to a lack of financial benefit for the area despite a prior abundance of natural resources (deRoche & deRoche, 1987). Atlantic Canada is seen as economically lagging behind the rest of Canada (Toughill, July 18, 2001, A01) and industrial Cape Breton is seen as lagging behind the rest of Atlantic Canada (“Province of Cape Breton?,” A10). In 1998, the area’s official unemployment rate reached 25% due to the collapse of all three primary industries: fishing, coal and steel (Rolls, 1998, p. 4). It stood at 12% in 2005, still twice that of the city of Halifax (Toughill, Jun 18, 2005, F01).

During my interviews and online, CBLocals users projected a general sense of pessimism regarding economic affairs in Cape Breton. Some agreed with the stereotype of the “lazy Cape Bretoner,” which is found in other parts of Nova Scotia and even Canada at large (McKay, 2000). Critics deride a recent influx of call-center service positions, allegedly linked to political patronage, as expendable (Toughill, May 14, 2005, p. F01). In the mid-2000s, the Switzerland-based Xstrata investigated the possibility of re-opening a Donkin coal mine in Cape Breton. This excited some but others worried it was ecologically regressive. Doubts also emerged about whether or not local miners would fit into Xstrata's plans (“Coal Giant,” 2005, p. D04).

The specter of the “Tar Ponds” also looms. It is a hazardous wastes site resulting from over 80 years of coke oven refuse. It is located just outside of Sydney in Whitney Pier and is often a point of reference for Cape Breton in popular Canadian culture despite numerous wooded areas and hiking trails that bedeck the island as a whole. Over 20 years of public debate has led to a proposed incineration plan to clean up the ponds with funding from both the provincial and
federal government. The residents nearest the Tar Ponds engaged in a years-long struggle for relocation funds. 20 years later, no cleanup plan was complete (Hamilton, 2005). Some CBLocals participants cite the Tar Ponds as a metaphor for their frustrations with fellow Cape Bretoners: discouraging action by too thoroughly discussing rather than proceeding forward with action.

Prospects for youth in Cape Breton are as murky as the Tar Ponds. The 2004 Nova Scotia Statistical Review revealed out-migration from Cape Breton totaling 803 people ages 0-17, 4,168 people ages 18-24 and 1,901 people ages 25-44. The 18-24 figure is striking when one considers the overall figure for that age in the province was 3,919. The outmigration of 18-24-year-olds actually slightly exceeded that of the whole province on average. The latest “boom” has pointed many Cape Bretoners—old and young—to Western Canada; specifically Fort McMurray, Alberta. Many work there due to the high availability of jobs and higher wages in the hopes of saving money to return (Pottie, 2006). CBLocals owner Harry Doyle (then 29 years old) departed for British Columbia shortly after my fieldwork in July 2006. He performed contract technological development work and eventually returned to the Sydney area.

One possible reason for outmigration is minimal postsecondary opportunity. Nova Scotia capital Halifax contains several established universities (such as Dalhousie and St. Mary’s) and colleges to choose from. Mainland university Saint Francis Xavier University also draws some Cape Breton youth away as it is repeatedly rated by national magazine MacLean’s among the top three postsecondary institutions in the country. On the other hand, Cape Breton University traditionally battles a flagging reputation. It is frequently rated at the bottom of MacLean’s magazine’s national survey for undergraduate schools (although CBU also ranks favorably in categories such as “Classroom Experience”). Some still use the unflattering nickname “High
School on the Highway”— referring to both its low status and its location between Sydney and Glace Bay (McEldowney, 2002).

Cape Breton youth are also at significant risk for addiction to the controversial prescription drug Oxycontin (Covell, 2004). In 2004, one recovering addict cautioned people to “get as far away from Cape Breton as you can. If you're not on Oxy here, somebody is trying to get you on it. I've been to Halifax and New Brunswick. It's not like that there” (“New kind of plague,” 2004). Whether or not it can be proven such risks are disproportionately lower in areas outside of Cape Breton, the “Oxy” reputation remains.

With all of these developments, Cape Breton’s residents are older on average than ever before. CBLocals has not been immune. Many musicians, promoters, writers and fans from the scene have scattered across Canada. As Halifax is nearby and possesses a higher youth population, it has become a host for many CBLocals alumni. This inspired the development of HalifaxLocals as Sean MacGillvary decided upon his move to the area to help expand to the Locals concept to his new area of residence.

Despite the negative developments in the past 30 years, Cape Bretoners of all ages are often very proud to identify themselves as Cape Bretoners (or “Capers” for short). In my summer 2006 interviews, most subjects identified themselves as proud “Capers.” Most cited friendliness as chief quality of Cape Bretoners and also repeatedly mentioned that we were a very gregarious people. “Like to have a good time,” stressed one 21-year-old resident. Another compared Halifax and Sydney with the metaphor of delegates at an East Coast Music Awards weekend: “they have the beer, but we have the party!”

Along with cherishing a reputation for perseverance in tough times and general friendliness, another great source of pride for Cape Bretoners has been their music. Several
respondents identified Cape Breton as a highly musical place. One user put it thusly: “Around here, if you throw a rock, you will hit a musician.” With the rich musical history of the area also emerges contention over the shadows cast by the Celtic reputation of the area to which many CBLocals participants do not relate.

The CBLocals Position in Cape Breton’s Music Culture

In his discussion of popular music in New South Wales, Chris Gibson (2002) demonstrates that music can emerge as a "niche cultural industry" in specific regions of the world. He uses the example of the economically depressed New South Wales Far North Coast, which he argues has a unique mix of emerging popular music production coupled with a traditional association with country music. The resulting music industry, he argues, sustains a cultural "niche" but has not yet improved the employment situation in the area. Similarly, the CBLocals scene is an emergent group of rock musicians performing in an area traditionally associated with Celtic music. Despite the continually developing music industry in the area, Cape Breton remains economically underdeveloped.

Cape Breton Island is associated with kitchen parties and highland dancing. Few outside Cape Breton who are aware of the region identify it with rock or pop music. The entire island of Cape Breton is strongly associated with Gaelic, Celtic and Scottish music (more commonly referred to under the umbrella term of “Celtic” in terms of its sound). John G. Gibson (1998) traces the historical underpinnings of the Celtic tradition to the aforementioned late 18th and early 19th century Scottish immigration. Fiddle music and bagpiping were communal practices forming a large part of local dances during that time.

Cape Breton Celtic has been explained as a musicologically distinct representation of Cape Breton culture. It is noted for its “updriven bowing” and frequency of “cuts”
(MacGillvary, 1981, Pittaway, 1998, Hebert, 2002). In short, there is a definable “Cape Breton sound” that practitioners of other genres of music of the area would be hard-pressed to claim. Cape Breton fiddle music sounds different from fiddle music elsewhere. This helps make the genre very exportable (Rolls, 1998, p. 7). The commercial renaissance of Cape Breton Celtic was the mid-1990s, when the Rankin Family, Mary Jane Lamond, Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIssac were featured on Canadian national music charts (DeMont, 1993, Leblanc, November 2, 1996).

The shadow of Celtic music is now cast as physically as it is metaphorically with the installment of a giant fiddle-and-bow monument on the Sydney waterfront in 2005. This is symbolic of the attention tourists place on Cape Breton’s Celtic heritage: the monument is placed right where summer cruise ships make their stop. As record labels courted Halifax rock bands in the 1990s, band manager Chip Sutherland suggested the market in the East Coast was still driven towards Celtic music. “At every dance in Cape Breton, there'll be a band playing and then there's a fiddle set…the market is right there. The market for rock music is not as strong” (Leblanc, August 28, 1993, p. 1).

No recent music event in Nova Scotia has been as financially viable as the Celtic Colours festival, the leading event in Cape Breton for providing revenue through music (Ross, 2003). In 2004, Celtic Colours featured 44 concerts and accounted for $5.94 million (Canadian) in island revenue (Hitchner, 2004). Conversely, Gobblefest attracts a few hundred locals to the Sydney area on Canadian Thanksgiving weekend in October. In September and October of each year, the Cape Breton Post regularly devotes several cover stories to Celtic Colours events and developments. Gobblefest usually receives one or no print stories; instead it is simply displayed in some sort of “events” column in passing on Thanksgiving weekend.
Some CBLocals scene members are fans and/or practitioners of Celtic music. The most notable are Valerie MacMillan (formerly of Lighthouse Choir), Morgan Currie (Tom Fun Orchestra) and Sean MacGillvary (Great Plains). Teenage artist Danny MacNeil plays acoustic guitar; his music is removed from Celtic heritage, but he also proudly speaks Gaelic. Despite these examples, it is rare to hear Celtic influence in CBLocals music. MacMillan plays Gaelic fiddle music among non-CBLocals circles but she was very vocal in differentiating this from the style of music she played in Lighthouse. Currie refers to himself as a violinist, not as a fiddler, in Tom Fun.

The CBLocals scene is generally unnoticed regionally and nationally as the press’ portrayal of Cape Breton music tends to focus overwhelmingly on Celtic music. One month prior to my fieldwork, journalist Cinda Chavich contrasted Halifax as host to lively rock scene to Cape Breton as the center of the Celtic universe:

It's hard to turn around without bumping into someone who is connected to this Canadian style of Celtic music and the living culture that's so steeped in it. Everywhere I look, there's a notice stuck to a telephone pole or town hall door, announcing another ceilidh (pronounced KAY-lee). That's Gaelic for a party with musicians and dancing, and there's at least one, somewhere around here, nearly every night (T5).

Most of my interviewees felt such portrayals offered an inaccurate reflection of the area as a whole. One stated the Celtic reputation only reflected remote areas of the island, but not the industrial area: "Sydney is the only (major Atlantic Canadian city) that you cannot find a dedicated Celtic/Irish fiddle tune bar. Yet Sydney is the only one with the world's largest fiddle." Others were more antagonistic towards the Celtic music scene, criticizing it for functioning as an
export at the expense of community-building. One interviewee described *Celtic Colours* as “exploitative,” a “faux festival” and more beneficial to the organizers than to local musicians.

What separates the CBLocals scene from most other indie rock scenes is how it functions as an alternative to Celtic music. This helps us to understand that even though many CBLocals musicians perform genres considered nationally popular, they often consider themselves to be “underground” in Cape Breton, as they are not Celtic. I argue that this music scene is different from most scenes discussed in past literature of music scene studies. Hence this dissertation is in a position to provide a distinct insight on a variety of theoretical exchanges within the field about scenes as a community and issues of locality.

**THEORIZING MUSIC AND COMMUNITY**

My understanding of music scenes emerges from a fusion of Will Straw’s introduction of the term stressing “cultural space” and the punk aesthetic that Alan O’Connor (2002) and Ryan Moore (2007) stress which emphasizes infrastructure. The study of music scenes reveals that many musicians cherish the “D.I.Y.” (Do It Yourself) ethic of independent production. Moore argues that while the dissent of punk is often located in terms of its style, it is the mode of production where the biggest resistance is found: “I have also located resistance in punk subculture’s practice of creating independent media for the purposes of creative expression, cultural participation and community formation.” (p. 467).

CBLocals.com is a form of independent media that also provides a major portion of the infrastructure that supports a music scene. The events listing functions as a method of promoting shows and creating awareness of what members of the community are doing. Participants use the forum to debate issues regarding booking shows and recording music. Many people looking for various instruments or places to stay when visiting the areas with Locals websites can visit
the site and make inquiries related to these matters. The site—its messageboard in particular—also acts as a “cultural space” for the music scene participants. Users become familiar with others’ tastes and communication styles. Just as personalities emerge in the offline setting, individuals exude various online personae with a varying degree of difference from the offline counterpart depending on the participant. Whereas the website is strictly defined as being dedicated to local music, by way of its interactivity it becomes a general gathering space for music fans to talk about a variety of subjects extending beyond music as the community emerges from a group of seemingly likeminded people.

This dissertation introduces a number of points about CBLocals that contribute to our understanding that locality remains significant in our understanding of music scenes. I first define CBLocals as an “indie rock” scene and then preview two points upon which this dissertation will demonstrate the local context that remains significant within CBLocals culture.

**The Interlocality— and Locality— of Indie Rock**

An interdependent world—economically and socially—is not a condition strictly of the late 20th and early 21st century. The study of music scenes operates on the presumption of this interdependence. More specifically, “indie rock” scenes connect a variety of regional areas into one cohesive understanding of a musical community. “Indie rock” is a nebulous term that joins music fans across regional borders.

Short for “independent rock,” the term refers to rock bands that distribute their music independently of the four multinational companies that own all of the major record labels (Universal, Sony/BMG, EMI and Warner Music Group). The term is slippery in that bands that play for smaller labels sometimes rely on distribution from the “big four” and their subsidiaries. Other terms used in its place are “D.I.Y.” or “punk” (in terms of ethos, not sound). Michael
Azerrad’s (2001) weaving of four American cities into one 1980s underground revolution and Theodor Matula’s (2000) articulation of the Pixies’ devoted following both document the national appeal of such terms in the United States.

Admittedly, some of my interviewees were reluctant to describe CBLocals as an indie rock scene. Some felt the term was so bastardized that it no longer communicated meaning (“when I think indie rock, I think Weezer,” said an older user, in disparaging reference to the major label band). Others could not accurately articulate what indie rock meant and therefore felt uncomfortable placing CBLocals under a definition they did not fully understand. Others, however, were very comfortable placing CBLocals in the indie rock genre and as part of a network of analogous scenes across Atlantic Canada. A twenty-something CBLocals user described going to a show in a European country and stated that "everyone looked like someone I knew." The indie rock, and punk to a similar degree, aesthetic is a cultural signifier that expands beyond regional borders and unites people from disparate area with a sense of shared cultural space.

Will Straw (1991), in his influential early work on scene studies, suggests that “interlocality” is vital to a scene. He argues that as indie rock scenes possess many similarities from place-to-place, there is a musical cosmopolitanism that permeates each scene. Thus in indie rock scenes, musical practices and points of reference are likely to be similar “from one community to another” (p. 78). It is more a form of social differentiation than musical style. Ryan Hibbett (2005) concurs and describes “indie rock” as a social marker; used similarly across America and not differently from town-to-town.

However, this leads to a dangerous assumption that the socialization of “indie rock” is devoid of locality. Portmanteaux such as “glocal” or “translocal” emerge to describe music
scenes that are increasingly tied together rather than operating autonomously. Connell and Gibson (2003) make what I believe is a dangerous assumption of complete disconnect from locality. “The increasing use of Internet resources has enabled many parallel subcultures to become connected…one effect of this has been to de-link the notion of scene from locality” (p. 107). They put forth the idea that geographical descriptions such as “New York scene” are no longer the foundation for connection to music scenes. Instead, they argue, genres and networks are taking center stage. They, along with Roy Shuker (1998) and Tony Mitchell (1996), apply the term “glocalization” in their description of music-based movements. In using the term, the authors assert that neither local nor global can be fully realized as once conceived; rather there is a continued fluidity between the two.

Shuker (1998) writes, “‘glocalization’… (emphasizes) the complex and dynamic interrelationship of local music scenes and the international marketplace” (p. 132). He refers to rock and roll as the primary example: the global phenomenon was the catalyst in many local scenes— for instance, he writes of the 1950s onset of youth clubs in New Zealand. Many of those local artists sought a global audience. Subsequently, had this scene found a wider audience, it would have become the new catalyst and the process would repeat itself. Therefore, there is no pure localized essence in either the music or movements, but the smaller scenes are significant in maintaining the global phenomena of popular music. Hence, “glocal” describes a state in which there is no prevalence of one over the other.

Holly Kruse (2003) disagrees with this line of argumentation and I concur. She too uses the portmanteaux approach of describing the fluidity of global-local tensions. She makes a case for the translocal: scenes are dependent upon each other but still maintain qualities unique to themselves. She sees theories of the glocal or interlocal dangerously leaping towards denying
“the specificity of each locality… variations between localities due to scene histories and current influences…(means reception) will vary from one local scene to another” (p. 137). The Internet should be given as much consideration for reproducing intense locality (suggested by Bennett & Peterson) as it is for as “de-linking” from such interests.

CBLocals operates in a translocal environment. The website positions itself as part of a regional circle of “Locals” pages as is the messageboard. There are some members who frequent more than their own homepage in order to communicate with others. From time to time, people outside of this regional circle post to the messageboards. They do not provide their information on the main site unless it pertains to an event taking place in the Cape Breton area. Many participants (such as myself) on the CBLocals forum are from the area but living elsewhere; using it to keep tabs on what is taking part in the area.

However, two areas clearly demonstrate that the CBLocals scene is distinct from other parts of Atlantic Canada and the world. First, the scene presents a distinct perspective on how music scenes function as subcultures. Second, it demonstrates that authenticity, a concept strongly linked to music scenes, is especially tied to specific issues of locality in the CBLocals scene.

**Subcultures and Subcultural Authority**

The CBLocals messageboard activity of 2006 represents a tension inherent in two principles that underwrite a majority of indie rock scenes. On the one hand, these scenes are posited as subcultures, resisting the cultural authority of popular taste and outwardly resenting the authoritarianism seen to be suppressing creativity. On the other hand, these scenes are usually imbued with highly authoritative hierarchies in their own right and based on a certain sense of meritocratic principle, even if vaguely defined.
I use the term “subculture” to refer to an ideal to which certain individuals and/or groups aspire in order to differentiate themselves from mainstream culture. In music scenes, this involves coalescence around art, artifacts and/or style which are deemed to either be unpopular or less popular than the mainstream. Due to the interdependence of popular culture and subcultures, it is difficult to discern where one begins and the other ends. Hence, I refer to subcultures as a reality derived from an imaginary rather than as a tangibly demonstrative concept. It is worthy to investigate how the pursuit of a subculture affects those who participate in a given community and the varying levels of attachment users have to maintaining a subcultural status for CBLocals.

I develop my understanding of subcultural ideals through Sarah Thornton’s fusion of Pierre Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” and Dick Hebdige’s function of subcultures. Bourdieu (1984) originates the concept of cultural capital to articulate the idea that money and goods are not the only items that can be understood as logics of capital. The most privileged groups of society maintain their power not only through economic capital but also through markers of social status. Examples include a certain type of diction, schooling or upbringing. Hence capital is exchanged through far more than money. Bourdieu’s framework does not leave much room for social mobility, although one can observe fluctuations when one rises from poverty to riches, for example.

Hebdige (1978) focuses on English punks of the late 1970s to describe what he believes are subcultures. 1970s punks are an example of a subculture, he argues, because they utilized items from the dominant culture in order to create a social order distinct from the dominant. One example includes the use of safety pins as fashion items rather than for their intended use. Hebdige uses Claude Lévi-Strauss’ (1966) concept of “bricolage” to frame this establishment of
style via the disregard of the mainstream culture’s intended purpose. Bricolage provides a sense of empowerment. Youth subcultures thus define their differentiation from mainstream culture by instilling a new meaning in some established artifact or style.

Hebdige (1987) acknowledges subcultural style is very quickly “co-opted” by other cultures thereby creating an ongoing dialog between subcultures and dominant/ “mainstream” culture. For example, R.E.M. began in the early 1980s as a band with a small, loyal following in Athens, Georgia. Knowledge of R.E.M.’s music bestowed one with a great deal of social capital amongst a fanbase devoted to rock music played outside of Top 40 radio. Over time, R.E.M.’s national stature increased and the band signed on to major label Warner Records in 1988. By 1991, the band produced a multi-platinum album (*Out of Time*) and diversified their sound to include “poppier” songs. This modified the subcultural capital accrued to familiarity with R.E.M.’s work as the band integrated into mainstream culture. This angered some as signing to a major label is correlated to “selling out” due to the separation from the ideal of subcultural status.

However, Sarah Thornton (1995) argues that the politics of subculturalists is not purely oppositional. She brings Bourdieu and Hebdige together to extend our understanding of subcultures in her analysis of British rave scenes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She argues that the mainstream media often provides a validation of the “underground value” that subculturalists seek: “(The media) do not just represent but participate in the assembling, demarcation, and development of music cultures” (p. 161). Furthermore, she stresses that mainstream media representation is *not* the end of subcultures’ subversion but rather its entire point. She writes, “derogatory media coverage is not the verdict but the essence of their
She furthermore credits the dominant culture with “(generating) ideas and (inciting) culture” (p. 157).

Ryan Moore (2007) takes a different approach. Describing punk scenes in relation to Bourdieu’s theory, he suggests that these subcultures redefine the “rules” of creativity and do not seek antagonism from the dominant culture. Simultaneously, members of such groups acknowledge what they do ultimately affects the mainstream:

These cultural producers do not simply compete within the field on its own terms but challenge the way the game is played by redefining the rewards worth pursuing. In the process, their struggle alters the field itself: even pop stars must answer to the fact that critics find their music derivative and uninspired, for example (p. 468).

Moore identifies a crucial tipping point: artists do “challenge the way the game is played” but they still “compete within the field on its own terms.” This discards the image of the musician who tries to radically eschew the capitalism of rock only to be “bought out” by the corporate system. In other words, many within punk subcultures do not seek to overthrow the capitalist system, but prefer not to measure their success with it. Whether they “sell out” or stay with the independent label, they argue artistic independence (if not financial) and creativity are the true measures of their success.

Thornton’s proposed dialectic can be summarized thusly: subculturalists see themselves as resisting a higher cultural authority and such, this higher cultural authority’s dismissal is a necessary element of their self-construction. Acceptance or ignorance does not suffice. Moore argues instead that subculturalists are subject to no more derision from higher cultural authority than the average pop star. Instead, they define their resistance through independence and setting
goals different from what the dominant culture might recognize as measures of success (record sales, financial gain, and so forth).

These are strong, though differing, conceptions of the subcultural process. Moore’s commentary is a necessary extension of Thornton’s conclusions. For instance, media coverage of the CBLocals website is sporadic (almost non-existent on a national or international level). Therefore, the negative verdict of higher cultural authority is not the essence of how those within this scene define themselves. For the most part, the higher cultural authority (newspapers, television) pays little attention unless they have something positive to say, reflected in the critical appraisal of more popular bands within the scene such as Slowcoaster and Tom Fun Orchestra.

Instead, my work reveals that within the CBLocals community, there are varying attitudes towards what counts as “underground” and those who disagree with the website’s “underground” mission completely. Furthermore, with an absence of a higher cultural authority, there is a tendency for some within the scene to turn to the tastemakers within the subcultural as the higher cultural authority. Disparaging these participants is a marker of their resistance. Specifically, I refer to those who resisted the authority of messageboard moderator Sean MacGillvary and website owner Harry Doyle. MacGillvary and Doyle consider themselves strong contributors to a subculture within Cape Breton, yet some users viewed them as “the man,” repressing certain elements of expression on the forum and website.

Furthermore, the popularity of certain bands within the scene created resentment even if that popularity did not raise these bands beyond subcultural status within Cape Breton. Drowning Shakespeare was never played on local radio and never attracted more than 150 people to view them at any time during my study. Yet to disgruntled critics of the screamo genre of music, Drowning Shakespeare represented mainstream culture against which they needed to
rebel. Yet, as discussed above, any music written and performed outside of the Celtic genre qualified as subcultural to other members of the CBLocals community.

**Authenticity**

Another significant contribution of this dissertation is how it reframes our understanding of issues of authenticity within music scenes. Decades of music scenes have been accompanied by decades of musicians attempting to prove themselves as “authentic,” “real” and—most importantly—as not “selling out.” The CBLocals scene demonstrates that what constitutes “selling out,” however, is not cut-and-dried.

I refer to “authenticity” to describe the evaluative terms that one uses to discern the difference of whether another merely occupies cultural space or truly belongs in or represents that cultural space. Like subcultures, authenticity within music scenes is more of an ideal than a tangible reality. Authenticity is usually only a visible issue when it is called into doubt. Therefore, one is usually introduced to a debate over authenticity by hearing accusations of the contrary. One example of the issue of authenticity being called into question is one refers to bands as “contrived,” “fake,” and “phony.” Authenticity is debated in terms of the music itself as well as other mannerisms and the social origins of one’s involvement in a music scene.

It is not surprising that the theme of authenticity is prevalent in music scene discussions. The folk era construction of authenticity is that of musicians organically coming upon their sound and image rather than consciously striving for it. Cynicism surrounding the pop music industry is focused on a blatantly inorganic process. Sometimes, the construction of pop acts is blatant and transparent. Reality shows such as *Making the Band* and *Rock Band* capture the process of constructing an image of a musical act. These types of programs are in direct contrast to a folk era image of a more organic process of making music: people meeting randomly,
gradually forming bands and developing a sound over years of playing shows and jamming. Authenticity equates with originality. Work too highly derivative of another work equates with inauthenticity.

It is ironic that rock music scenes wrestle fervently with issues of authenticity as the music initially labeled “rock and roll” originally received derision from critics who felt it had an absence of credible authentic substance. Bruno Nettl (2005) attributes the original definition of popular music to that which cannot be pinned down to a small cultural base: “its cultural and ethnic identity was always difficult to determine, and it was thus thought to lack authenticity” (p. 187). The CBLocals music scene provides an example as its music is differentiated from other music in Cape Breton in this way. Whereas fiddle is rooted in Cape Breton ancestry (MacGillvray, 1981), most CBLocals rock, pop and punk music traces back to the “ethnic-less” popular music Nettl describes.

Therefore the music itself in the CBLocals culture is in many ways an explicit re-definition or outright rejection of regional identity. A friend within the scene once shared a tale of being kicked out of an East Coast Music Award delegate party for not playing “real Cape Breton music” when he and his friends attempted to play some alternative rock in 1996. A resentment against the “old guard” of Cape Breton music thus leads some within the scene to conclude that accepting government funding for musical projects to be more of a sellout than ceding to commercial interests. This perspective, discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, brings new complications to our understanding of authenticity not found in other music scenes.

There are other manners in which authenticity is displayed or evaluated within a music scene besides musical lineage. In fact, many of the individuals making judgments on musical authenticity have little expertise to make such evaluations. Moore (2002) writes “the attribution
of authenticity cannot always take place with explicit reference to matters of sonic design” (p. 210).

Richard A. Peterson (1997) reveals in his study of country music that authenticity is often a construction designed to imagine a folk culture and is divorced of an analysis of actual musical qualities. Peterson argues that there has never been an authentic country music. Over time, musicians, songwriters, publishers and even filmmakers all developed an understanding of what a “real” country experience was when one heard or saw it. Republic Films did more to convince people of what a real “cowboy” looked like with Gene Autry films than any encounters with a cowboy in which any audience members had ever participated (pp. 84-7). Peterson demonstrates that audiences ultimately decided authenticity in country was less in the music and more in the performer. Proving one was a legitimately a “geezer,” “hillbilly” or a “cowboy” in manner and lifestyle gave one the “right” to play that music in the eyes of listeners. Analogous processes continually reappear in music today. For instance, the media was fascinated with rapper 50 Cent’s visible proof of surviving gunfire. This exploration of the performer’s experience as a “gangsta” detracted from the aura of his rival, Ja Rule, who emerged as more “fake” in light of 50’s more documented “street cred” (Dickie, 2003, Graham, 2003).

Thus, the perception of authenticity not only frames one’s attachment (or lack of attachment) to regional identification, but also helps to define the parameters of membership within a culture. Several of my interviewees defined authenticity within the CBLocals scene as music outside the parameters of “cover bands.” Therefore, even if such an interviewee disliked a certain band’s music, they accepted them as authentic as long as they corresponded to that folk era image. One referred to Locals websites (in and out of Cape Breton) as a “cultural filter”: it eliminates bands that do not play original material, which he feels are not relevant. Of a
musician whose taste he deplores, he states “I don’t like what (he’s) doing but I think he’s genuine and CBLocals is a place for him.”

Nevertheless, authenticity remains arbitrary. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) rationalizes that many cultures are invested in an “authentic inauthenticity”: “as a popular sensibility, (it) is a specific logic which cannot locate differences outside the fact of its own temporary investment” (p. 226). Grossberg describes authenticity as an ideology grounded in aesthetics (the music), the body (dress and overall presentation) and an ability to articulate private but common feelings and experiences. I refer to the latter as “collective experiences.” He suggests that to be given the label of “authentic” is to be judged as unique and politically or economically uncompromised despite the postmodern awareness that nothing may really be authentic anymore. In the moment, being part of something “authentic” makes one feel different and part of a special experience.

I compress Grossberg’s model somewhat in that I group the body and articulation in the same category. I attribute both physical appearance and the ability to share common experience as methods of acquiring subcultural capital. For example, two music fans argue that s/he is the “true” fan of a band. One may cite that s/he owns more records by the group or has been “listening to them longer.” These claims are backed up with recollections that “only someone who was there would know.” It is reminiscent of the “show and prove” of aesthetic authenticity. In this case, the claim of being a “true fan” is the “show”; the supporting anecdotes the “proof.”

For example, during my interviews, many people wistfully recall watching House of Rock bands (particularly Slowcoaster) before their invasion of “mainstream” venues such as Smooth Herman’s or Daniel’s. Enjoying these bands today does not grant automatic inclusion in the CBLocals scene. Proving longtime devotion garners more respect. Many with professional approaches recognize the inherent financial value in regularly appearing at venues such as
Herman’s and Daniel’s. Those with an emphasis on an amateur approach stress the value of building community and avoiding places where they feel the overall CBLocals culture is not appreciated. The locations where bands are featured play a significant role in how their authenticity is constructed. CBLocals is far from placeless in the offline reality. Several people did not care where they saw Slowcoaster. Others found that their presence at Herman’s and Daniel’s detracted from their authenticity within the CBLocals scene. Placements within localities are still significant in how musicians are construed within scenes.

Furthermore, Canadian musicians receive funding opportunities that American counterparts do not receive. Yet they may view these opportunities with a suspicion not seen in other areas of the country. The economic depression of Cape Breton came on the heels of many years of the provincial government supporting the area's top industries. The resulting fallout when this support was withdrawn has led some members of the scene to be as suspicious of government grants as they would be of sponsorship, if not more. In the third chapter, I detail conflicting opinions on professionalism in the Cape Breton area and how it affects authenticity.

This dissertation will demonstrate that locality still matters when we discuss music scenes, and especially when we discuss authenticity. It is overly simplistic to suggest that bands simply sell out by accepting a commercial or signing to a major record label. In fact, a deep understanding of local context explains how people choose to frame such issues.

In addition to teaching us the importance of understanding music scenes in the present multimedia reality, this dissertation also contributes to our understanding of new media studies, specifically online communities. There is a continuing conversation in attempting to identify the evolution of online communities as a positive or negative development. I argue the CBLocals scene is one that has changed in a number of ways as it evolved from an offline community to an
integrated one, but it did not change significant dynamics in the community. The resulting mixed emotions users feel about the current Internet age leaves us to reevaluate what changes online communities do, and do not, represent.

**ONLINE COMMUNITY**

Before proceeding to discuss literature on online community, it is important to address why I choose to use this term over “virtual community.” Although Rheingold does not intend this with its use, I believe the term reifies offline communication. John A. Bargh and Katelyn McKenna (2004) note “studying how relationships form and are maintained on the Internet brings into focus the implicit assumptions and biases of our traditional (face-to-face) relationship and communication literatures…” (p. 587). “Virtual” implies a secondary relationship; that online communication is somehow “cloning” offline communication. A statement commonly found in some of my interviews is that “the Internet is not real life,” or words to that effect. As the research below demonstrates, there is no clear reason to reify either online or offline communities as the “real” since both have varying levels of tangible consequence. Therefore, on the few occasions when I use the term “virtual community,” I refer only to others’ use of the term and as interchangeable with what I describe as “online community.”

As I stress in the introduction, the integrated reality of the CBLocals community is significant. It is useful to address online community today by understanding websites and other forms of new media as what Fred Turner (2009) describes as *cultural infrastructure*. Turner uses the online search engine company Google and its presence at the Burning Man festival in San Francisco as an example. Members of the company visit this bohemian event, Turner reasons, because their manufacturing is dependent on the social structures they observe at the event:
As once, 100 years ago, churches translated Max Weber's protestant ethic into a lived experience for congregations of industrial workers, so today Burning Man transforms the ideals and social structures of bohemian art worlds, their very particular ways of being 'creative,' into psychological, social and material resources for the workers of a new, supremely fluid world of post-industrial information work (p. 76).

The CBLocals website provides a cultural infrastructure for the community by transforming discussions of music, art and general activity into a particular coherent sense of community. It is in this way that we understand it, and not as an entity separate from the shows and other social gatherings in which musicians and fans gather.

Nevertheless, a survey of online community studies is necessary to demonstrate how interactive forums have informed our understanding of community. Many discussions about online communities are largely informed by studies on geographically non-specific online forums. However, the geographical specificity of the CBLocals website and messageboard put this dissertation in the position to contribute to these discussions. Specifically, I address conversations about issues of place and space, the effect on social composition in communities and the general effect of developing media on community.

**Addressing a Loss of "Place" in Online Community**

As I detail in the methodology section, and in the fourth chapter, finding users under the age of 19 to participate in my study was difficult. Most were familiar with the CBLocals website, but they were more inclined to discuss MySpace in their informal conversations at shows. Additionally, they seemed as much connected, if not more so, to the bands of the southern Ontario music scene than to the bands of their Cape Breton elders. One may posit that
this fractures the community in such a manner that young Cape Breton musicians are buying into the “genre based” mentality of music scenes rather than the “locale based” approach. The “emo/screamo” genre was a unifying element for many Ontario and CBLocals bands.

This concern is reminiscent of the concern of scholars that the pursuit of community online deprives us of a collective sense of place. Roger Aden (1999) argues that increasing use of technology fosters a sense of alienation as we retreat more to it rather than to face-to-face communication. The implication is that any society with less face-to-face communication than its prior generation is *de facto* less interested, and less involved, in community. The "places" where people go, he insists, are of their own making from individual to individual, even when interests are shared.

Aden's cynicism is overstated as it too easily dismisses Rheingold's (1993) examples of very strong bonds between individuals being served through one listserv (the WELL). However, he raises a very important, and forward-looking, point about users increasingly looking to create a "place of their own" online. This dissertation addresses CBLocals, a locally based website designed to bring together a small community of fans, struggling for relevance in the face of the MySpace phenomenon.

U.S. media firm News Corp. purchased MySpace (*http://www.myspace.com/*) for more than $500 million U.S. in 2005. The website is free for use and features advertising for music, movies and television. Users create profiles for themselves and then add “friends” to increase their network. By the summer of 2006, it was the world’s sixth most popular website (Perkins, 2006). Its use increased by 167 percent in one year (“Exploring MySpace,” 2006). MySpace also allows bands and music artists to create their own official MySpace page with streaming audio and MP3s for download.
Many CBLocals bands created MySpace profiles for themselves although the younger bands such as Drowning Shakespeare and Richmond Hill were among the first. Even one user from the CBLocals forum created a CBLocals MySpace (http://www.myspace.com/cblocals) and people involved with the signature CBLocals events of the year (Gobblefest, Stoked For the Holidays) followed suit. This represented a threat to the CBLocals music community as the website focuses on networking people online with the absence of an expressed locality. Based on Aden's perspective, we can surmise that visitors to the Drowning Shakespeare or Richmond Hill MySpaces were being taken to a place of the band's imagination, rather than the CBLocals or Cape Breton music collective's imagination. As such, the bands were part of the marketplace more than the community.

By 2006, it was also becoming quite common for the sidebar of the CBLocals page to be filled with links to a variety of MySpace pages for the bands playing any given show. This is indicative of how quickly one can traverse "space" online as opposed to a physical environment. There is a tremendous amount of competition for one’s attention as the World Wide Web contains over 100 million websites equally accessible from the click of a button (Walton, 2006).

This endless accessibility of online space is a concern for Elizabeth Bird (1999), who is also dubious that the simplicity of online communication can foster sustainable community. She argues that people are capable of “dropping in and dropping out” too quickly to build bonds. She writes of anonymous “drop-in” phenomena such as chatrooms: “it is hardly surprising that these offer little sense of community” (p. 52) but concludes that "we should not assume that virtual connections necessarily wipe out face-to-face ones" (p. 64). (It also must be noted that Bird agrees with Putnam (2000) that communities in the traditional sense have been in decline long before the advent of the Internet).
Barry Wellman et. al (2003) are equally concerned with the Internet's endless options. They argue that knowledge and connectivity does not necessarily translate to commitment. A user can log off at any time much faster than one can turn his or her back on a community in a physical environment. They also argue that “networked individualism” has prospered with the development of technology: “The developing personalization, wireless portability, and ubiquitous connectivity of the Internet all facilitate networked individualism as the basis of community.” They ask readers to consider the cell phone. Previously, the location (often shared by several) would dictate the placement of a telephone. With cellphones, one user can take it wherever s/he pleases. Likewise, users treat the Internet more and more, they argue, as a tool of individual convenience. If someone is kicked out of a bar for violating the terms of the community, it can be quite disconcerting as there may be few or no other places to drink. On the Internet, there are boundless spaces to locate yourself. Hence the motivation to adhere to norms for the betterment of the community is lessened. This is why they suggest online communities will always be fragile. Violating one’s obligation to their online gathering often comes with no immediately visible repercussion or any of the awkwardness of offline confrontations.

These arguments of “drop in, drop out” users reify media at the expense of its users. It is difficult to surmise that all of the users who “drop out” are seeking any sense of community. Looking at those who do not seek community from the Internet is not a model for understanding how online community functions. Consider the communal potential of four friends meeting regularly at coffee shop: the remaining customers do not visit often and offer impersonal dialog. If this group of friends, however, continues to meet regularly at this location, their bond will not be any weaker for the casual coffee shop attendees around them.
It is true that the many of the attendees of the AA shows were gradually disconnecting from CBLocals and connecting to MySpace. This does not diminish the number of users who made CBLocals part of their daily routine. The audience for the actual CBLocals website was peaking at the time of my research. During May 2006, as my interviews began, the CBLocals website attracted 11,240 unique visitors. In April 2009, the number of unique visitors listed was 3,566. However, it is still conceivable that the CBLocals messageboard has retained the same number of visitors. Data for the CBLocals messageboard specifically is not attainable but the family of Locals messageboards attract over 30 million visits monthly\(^1\). An average of 15-20 threads of discussion are currently active on any given day on the CBLocals messageboard.

In an era of individualized networks, CBLocals is a community, town hall model of Internet communication that still has a significant audience. The sense of community among those that were faithfully using the website was evident in a number of comments I received from interviewees 21 and older:

- I don't think there'd be a sense of community (without CBLocals) and once people left Cape Breton, that would be it.
- CBLocals, it's a subculture community....people that aren't involved know that we're here but they don't know what it is. I'll say 'I'm going to a Locals show' and they have no idea, they go 'oh, one of those things..." They're aware of the bands, but not the scene.
- (You look at the) CBLocals hoodies and that's people saying "my scene, my community, my culture." It's like a badge of where you belong.

\(^1\) Data on the CBLocals website and on the Locals messageboards were accessed via a website that the CBLocals website owners did not want disclosed in this dissertation.
The fact remains that even if the CBLocals community is only a small portion of the people attending shows, the idea of such a community still holds a strong place in the minds of many users. Of the aforementioned quotes, the most interesting is the individual who argues that CBLocals creates a sense of Cape Breton for users no longer living there: "once people left Cape Breton, that would be it." None of the users that I interviewed, either residing in and out of Cape Breton, cited MySpace or any other website as a source of keeping in touch with the local music scene. They identified themselves as part of the community primarily through the website and messageboard. Furthermore, resident users concurred, citing how they felt users who had moved to Sweden, England, the United States and across Canada were still members of the community in their mind because of their continued presence on the CBLocals messageboard after their departure.

The CBLocals example is demonstrative not of a false community, but rather a community confronting a generational crisis in the face of a succeeding generation preferring another space to the one they themselves had created for discussing local music. There is an interesting parallel as offline, Cape Breton has undergone a serious outmigration of individuals ages 18-24. On CBLocals, teenage users were "outmigrating" to other websites. The future 18-24-year-olds were finding their online representations in more individualized networks. In the fourth chapter, I explore the nostalgia for traditional community and discover that much of the ambiguity that older users feel is rooted in the fact that the same medium that drew them to the CBLocals community has evolved in such a fashion that it is gradually aging and diminishing that community.
Social Composition on the 'Net

Maria Bakardjieva (2003) argues that two elements of online communication support the thesis that it can build true community. First, online communities allow for equality in participation that privately established groups do not: “(Members) transcend the sphere of narrowly private interest and experience” (p. 291). Logic dictates that anyone with a computer can have a voice, unlike a television or radio program where one needs to purchase time to be heard. Second, critics who refuse to acknowledge online gatherings as communities are too narrow in their understanding of the term. Online communication provides a “different (form) of engagement” or what she defines as “virtual togetherness” (p. 292).

Bakardjieva’s thesis of equality is complex. Her second point is more worthy of agreement than the first (despite my objection to the “virtual” adjective). The mantra “anyone can participate” is often untrue. Most online forums are moderated and users’ ISPs can be “locked” if they violate what the moderator perceives to the community’s rules or norms. Even if participation is equal within community, access to the community may not be. Not everyone can afford the luxury of a personal computer even if they share the interests of the users in an online community. If these members are part of a community that convenes both on and offline, inequality of participation exists between those offline, those online, and those fully integrated.

There are other issues that break down any theory of the Internet as a place to subvert hierarchical controls over participation. While there is no denying that the Internet has broken down certain barriers for individuals to have a media platform, there are still significant issues of control that are discussed in scholarship in online communities. The CBLocals music scene is typical of any other scene in this respect. There are those who are in higher standing than others, those who have more resources than others and those who can more directly modify how the
community operates. While this does not prove that Internet causes—or makes worse—any erosion of equality, I argue in this dissertation that social composition remains largely unchanged by the Internet.

Every website has an owner and therefore at least one moderator exercising power. This owner and however many moderators there are exert control of the site’s content. Furthermore, even if a website evolves in a laissez-faire fashion, there still is likely to be exclusion via whatever norms of the community that emerges.

The issue of class appears to be negligible online as it relates to CBLocals as the scene has primarily featured lower-to-middle class participants. Many areas of Cape Breton feature a number of free-for-use community terminals (the Sydney city library is one example), suggesting that access is attainable for anyone who already attended shows. During my attendance of shows in the summer of 2006, I literally did not come across anyone at the all-ages shows who was unaware of the website. Despite a number of interview subjects in age range of 25-30 years citing the importance of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) to the community in the late 1990s, others (such as myself) never once participated in an IRC session. This is perhaps more indicative of the evolution of the community than lack of access since I fully possessed the capability to log on to such IRC programs. So some members of the community may not even be a part of the website—whether through inconvenience or personal choice.

One example of exclusion that frequently occurs in music scenes is that of women. Jamie Mullaney (2007) describes the “going rate” of music scenes. Describing “straightedge” music scenes, Mullaney claims that users argue that their scenes are not sexist because the “going rate” of participation is attainable to both men and women. In this case, the going rate is an interest in a non-promiscuous, drug-free lifestyle. What this overlooks, Mullaney argues, is that while the
rate is attainable, the overall qualities portrayed by the community remain masculine. “When
discussing what makes one an authentic sXer, two important dimensions (emerge): hardness and
control…traditionally (these concepts) have carried associations of masculinity” (p. 397). She
demonstrates how this leads to women ultimately trying to emulate the men within the
community, leading to self-doubt by way of comparison with the men.

Norma Coates’ (1998) investigation of online forums on rock music reveals that
interaction on mixed-gender forums does little to counteract such a "going rate." She takes such
forums to task for hosting a hostile atmosphere that discourages women’s participation. It is
difficult to establish a user forum composed entirely of women without resorting to high amounts
of information solicitation for a username. Thus women find themselves trapped in the “boys’
club,” and encounter additional hassle in trying to subvert it. Coates references the formation of
“Clitlist”— a woman-centered alternative to the “Rocklist” dominated by men that Coates and
others found frustratingly sexist. In this case, the Internet did not help rock fans to communicate
in a more egalitarian fashion.

One need not conclude from Coates’ work that the Internet either creates or exacerbates
sexism. “Rock and roll” has been chided for being a “boys’ club” long before the advent of the
Internet. What we can conclude is that the Internet appears to often replicate various social
biases that persisted beforehand. Therefore, by examining the online exclusionary practices, one
can learn about the community's biases as a whole (i.e. rock scenes often exclude women and
this was visibly observable in the “Rocklist” case).

The website featured more men than women as did the music scene as a whole. Of
course, no men in CBLocals would directly identify with any sexism inherent either on the forum
or within the community (for that matter, neither would most of the women). The same was true
of heterosexism and racism. Although Cape Breton is a predominantly white area (as I discuss later in this chapter), the numbers seen at shows and online are disproportionately white by comparison. There are very few openly gay users. CBLocals still seems to “hail” the white men above others.

Jonathan Paul Marshall (2007) notes that the Internet's promise of "invisibility" only goes so far in challenging the racial and cultural composition of communities. Eventually users are called to speak on issues of race, gender and so forth and through this, they must identify themselves or deny themselves their social identities. These findings complicate Mark Dery's (1993) theory of the “disembodied self” on the Internet. The disembodied self “(floats) free of biological and sociocultural determinant” (p. 561). For example, a 5’5 white man may visit a nationally available forum appearing as a 6’3 black woman with the confidence that no one will challenge the authenticity of his claim. Dery does not go so far as to declare that the Internet is devoid of racism because of this, but it provides an interesting theory of how people could "pass" to subvert the effects that exclusion might otherwise have based on their race, gender or class.

CBLocals, and other small locale-based web forums, challenge the concept of the “disembodied self” by developing a culture where people become so familiar with each other offline, the disembodied self appears an almost impossible construct. As one moderator puts it, “on CBLocals, every username is attached to a real person. It’s just like real life.” Yet not every user agrees. Several offer thoughts that are very much emblematic of the disembodied self. One user stated that when he criticizes others on the messageboard, it is a case of “me on the messageboard telling you on the messageboard what me on the messageboard feels about you on the messageboard.”
What is needed is an analysis of how the CBLocals’ website attracts certain users and fails to attract others. Unlike other studies on how the Internet affects perceptions of social composition, the CBLocals messageboard is geographically rooted. Hence there is a comparison that can be drawn between how these groups are portrayed online to how participation plays out offline. Research suggests that in geographically non-specific online forums, there are still constrictions in communication based on social groupings. In the second chapter, I discuss the practice of indie rock as a white, genre of music dominated by men and assess how, if at all, the Internet presence in a locally specific online community has affected this status.

One last area that is necessary to address is the direct effect on civic activity that the Internet has. Aside from the arguments of individualism vs. collectivism, other scholars focus on the question of whether or not Internet users simply do less in order to make events happen in their day-to-day life. Whereas some celebrate the accessibility to organization and promotion online, others argue that this has created a lazy generation that has reduced its activity steadily with technological advancements.

The Rise (and Dismissal) of Mass Culture

In a 2006 messageboard post, show organizer and Locals user Rod Gale declared in frustration, “these shows don’t just happen, get out there and organize!” He draws upon his pre-Internet recollection of the community to define negative qualities of the present media condition. In his mind, CBLocals should facilitate the staging of music events, but is causing the opposite to happen. If there are no music events staged, then one inevitably would be led to ask “what is the purpose of this website?” This echoes concerns that new technology creates complacency and erodes people's sense of civic participation. In fact, Gale’s grievance is a capsule of scholars’ attitudes towards several advances in media. In our discussion on issues of
activity contrasted with sedentary behavior, the progression of scholars' arguments on the media's detrimental effect on civic participation provides a useful lens for understanding the benefits and consequences.

Søren Kierkegaard (1846/1996) was among the earliest critics of media. He specifically held conceptions of the "public," fostered through newspapers, as responsible for "leveling" any perceptions of differences of status and value—even when they existed. He writes, "in order for leveling really to occur, first it is necessary to bring a phantom into existence, a spirit of leveling, a huge abstraction, an all-embracing something that is nothing, an illusion—the phantom of the public." Prior to the press, he continues, every individual would hold themselves accountable to step forward to express their opinion and make their contribution. They would never have a conceived of a "public" as the media presented it and would not associate that "public's" actions as suitable for expressing their means of participation.

Ferdinand Tönnies (1964) shares this concern from the 20th century perspective. He sees responsibility for Gemeinschaft (community) yielding further and further to impersonal, formal social relationships that formed "society" or Gesellschaft. As the Gemeinschaft is embodied by the shared interest of the neighborhood, Gesellschaft was embodied by a workplace of individuals presumably working together but only to meet individual ends. Print media and eventually television, Tönnies argued, left people feeling as they were connected to everyone else in a region or nation, but they were in fact isolating themselves from interaction in doing so.

Tönnies' perspective is seen in the most frequently cited critic of new media, Neil Postman (1985). Postman argues that television contributes to the disintegration of political discourse. Ever shortening news reports and highly controlled debates do little to impress the communication scholar. Postman has an even graver concern about television than how it
truncates events. He argues that television trivializes serious news items to a significant degree when it repackages them into "formats" designed to maximize entertainment value. This blurs the line between information and entertainment, and thus we "amuse ourselves to death," unaware of how to properly analyze or discuss serious matters.

This criticism finally extends to Hubert Dreyfus’ channeling of Kierkegaard in a dire assessment of the Internet (1998). Dreyfus argues that the 19th century philosopher "would have hated the Internet" because “anonymity and idle curiosity” override "responsibility and commitment" in a degraded public discourse that undermines community. He postulates that the Internet takes the hyperspeed that Postman criticized in television and pushes it to a new level. "The public sphere is a world in which everyone has an opinion on and comments on all public matters without needing any first-hand experience and without having or wanting any responsibility." This concern is found by those who worry that the decline of print journalism will erode any need for credentials to report events. Why do the research when you can go online, search other articles and hyperlink them, and then offer your opinion?

I see a parallel tension in debates within the CBLocals community on whether or not the presence of the Internet has created passivity amongst the scene participants. For proponents of the medium, the 'net is a great way to get word out about shows and to post music to attract new audiences. For detractors, it is a lazy shortcut that prevents people from having face-to-face conversations about disputes and from exploring other media to promote events. Why leave your living room until it is time for the show?

The lack of face-to-face time has also created a concern that people act differently with the cloak of anonymity that the Internet provides. This was particularly true in 2006 as libel suits across the United States jumpstarted a debate on whether or not people are too carefree with
what they state online (Parker, 2006, 1A). This debate continues in light of a recent Maryland Court of Appeals ruling that website or blog operators need not readily reveal posters' or contributors' identity in case of defamation suits (Davis, 2009). Scholars have posited different reasons for why individuals are more inclined to provocative communication online, but there is a consensus that people treat the way they communicate online differently from how they do so offline.

humdog (1996), a woman writing under her online pseudonym, argues electronic communities focus more on self-congratulation than building bonds: “(Most) people lurk...and the ones that post are pleased with themselves” (p. 40). Several users, both in interviews and in online posts, expressed concerns that on the Internet, people posted more to “raise their post count” than to contribute significantly to the conversation. Posts which derogatively called attention to other users were considered provocative and thus attracted attention, which critics argued was to the detriment of positive conversation. By "lurk," humdog refers to the opposite phenomenon—users who visit web forums without revealing themselves. humdog concludes that users would not necessarily "lurk" or speak "just to amuse themselves" in an offline environment because no benefits would be visible. In an online environment, an increased post count and notoriety lead to some sense of accomplishment and importance. This detracts, humdog argues, from any sense of responsibility from actions as nothing is perceived to be traced to the users committing them.

humdog's differentiation between lurkers and "self satisfied" posters raises an interesting point. First, she questions the idea that the most visibly active users are the most the most valued members of an online community. Second, she dismisses "lurkers" as insignificant voyeurs. While this may be true of her experience, Jenny Preece et. al (2004) suggest that lurkers are
actually motivated to help online community. Drawing upon interviews with various "lurkers" from MSN communities, they conclude that most lurkers are motivated to help or maintain communities. Among the reasons they do not post, Preece et. al argue, are that they either feel they do not know enough to participate or feel that they are helping forums avoid clutter by remaining silent.

CBLocals has both lurkers and a small number of people who manage to remain anonymous despite the close familiarity of the area. "Yes, I lurk," remarked one interviewee bluntly to me that had not set up a user account. During my interviews, at least two incidents of anonymous usage were cited, each user claiming this usage had not been “found out.” Yet these exceptions seemed only to prove the rule as most of the users who attracted attention online were consistently and clearly identified by those who discussed them. "There is a direct correlation between a username and a real person," concluded one user, whose opinion was shared by many of my interviewees.

Again, the CBLocals community is the embodiment of the current reality of integrated communities. Therefore the CBLocals website and forum offer an opportunity to investigate how Internet gathering sites provide cultural infrastructure to community when the vast majority of users commenting know they are identifiable. In the fourth chapter, in which I discuss the conflict between nostalgic and utopian perspectives on the Internet, this discourse greatly informs how the Internet affects community participation and how that is perceived by the community.

**ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY**

In order to fully demonstrate how the CBLocals music scene complicates our understanding of online communities and music scenes, I adopted an ethnographic methodology
to gain perspective of how the scene functions. This entailed not only observing shows, but interviewing a variety of participants, observing (and participating) in a number of messageboard conversations and drawing upon my own personal experiences predating this project.

I grew up in industrial Cape Breton and observed the CBLocals scene in its infancy in the early 1990s. Debates on native ethnography and how to address Internet communities anthropologically are among the many debates that have emerged in the development of ethnographic methods. I draw upon a variety of examples and debates to address the following concerns as it pertains to the ethnographic component of my project: the debate surrounding the Internet as a field, the problem of excess data and the issue of “native” vs. “auto” ethnography.

The Field in Your PC

The CBLocals community title comes from the Internet gathering location, thus creating concern over where exactly the “field” in this research lies. As stated earlier, I object to the terminology “virtual” in so much as it denies the reality of experiences lived through online interaction. In this case, I refer to “virtual ethnography” with reference to the extensive debate on the subject of ethnographies of online communities. The concept of place in fieldwork has been re-evaluated in light of the Internet’s onset.

Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and their contemporaries and students saw themselves as involved in the “exotic”: cultures so drastically different, they warranted extensive fieldwork to foster better understanding. Their work established the image of anthropologists as “lone fieldworkers” busying themselves in foreign territories. The strict observation of website activity runs counter to this vision. Concerns arising from this situation are evident in James Clifford’s (1997) questioning: “if someone (studies a culture)...and in the
process never ‘interfaced’ in the flesh...would the months, even years, spent on the Net be fieldwork?” (p. 61).

The onset of “virtual ethnography” has been subject to many how-to guides for veteran anthropologists attempting to answer “yes” to that question (Hine, 2000, Bell, 2001, Miller & Slater, 2000). There is precedent for attempting to study a music scene in such a manner. Rene Lysloff’s (2003) “mod” study involves no offline interaction. He claims “websites are not field sites in the traditional sense...nevertheless, many websites do represent the loci of complex networks of social relationships that are in fact dispersed in geographical space” (p. 238). Lysloff raises a valid point when he suggests that in general Internet theory there has been “not enough close-to-the-ground ethnographic study of the new social spaces the Internet makes possible” (p. 234). Indeed, the Internet mod scene proves to be a very complex social space; possessing a D.I.Y. mentality like punk and a complex social hierarchy like any previously investigated music scene. Lysloff’s decision to limit his research to online observation affirms the new social space of the Internet as “legitimate” and on-par with any “exotic” fieldwork study. It is still only one reflection of the social spaces the Internet creates. If anything, strictly adhering to the Lysloff approach may reinforce, rather than counteract, the imagined divide between the alleged “virtual reality” of the Internet and the “real” reality of offline communication.

I argue that much of the existing literature proves that I cannot answer my questions with strictly online research. CBLocals was founded around an already defined physical locality. It has become a term to describe a community that already existed— this alone makes it significant in terms of understanding its role in social space. Many have come into the scene via the website but few have been unidentified in the physical community. It would therefore be a
serious error to exclude the physical experiences of shows and gatherings from an ethnographic experience of the “CBLocals” community.

“Lurking” is also a serious ethical concern. David Bell (2001) explains that “lurkers are people who watch things like chat rooms or MUDs without actively participating– a kind of virtual voyeurism” (p. 198). A simple argument can be made that all online information is available for public use. Yet several libel situations have arisen from online postings (Parker, 2006). Bell warns against legal ramifications that can occur from such research, as does David Jacobson (1999). Jacobson cites “the identifiability of human subjects, the conceptualization of privacy, difficulties associated with obtaining informed consent, and the applicability of copyright laws” (p. 139). It is possible for a CBLocals user to edit his or her posts on the user forum, which indicates that some users perhaps wish to retract certain statements. Simply “lurking” on a messageboard and then reporting without consideration to both context and reconsideration of the users is not only inaccurate but also legally dangerous. I address these concerns in my methodology described later in this section. I mentioned this project repeatedly on the CBLocals website and messageboard itself so that users can be aware that it is taking place.

Additionally, I have taken measures to only directly link quotes to people as identified by users. It bears mentioning that in one interview, someone told me that a certain username corresponded with another person in my interview sample. However, that person mentioned nothing of this username. Furthermore, a search of the username's posts revealed several inconsistencies with the original claim. I could find no other evidence that this username could be reliably corresponded to the person ergo I gave no credence to the identification.
Identifications between usernames and person's real names are only made in this dissertation where I deem it necessary to demonstrate a point and where the vast majority of my interview sample was able to come to a consensus on the person behind the username. Some of the user identifications came from the people themselves but I refer to the generic "users identified" throughout the dissertation so as to maximize anonymity in my interview sample.

As strictly surveying the CBLocals website itself is inadequate, following the theoretical line of thought on multi-sited ethnography is useful. George Marcus (1998) states multi-sited ethnography is best when the researcher isolates a particular thing they are following. He lists people, things, metaphors, plots, biographies and conflicts as possible items to trace. Marcus’ approach is relevant to my study as I am not simply studying the “Cape Breton music scene” as I have articulated above. I am studying a specific representation of a music scene that is based in Cape Breton but also finds its articulation on a website and even through users who do not presently reside in Cape Breton. My focus, in Marcus’ terminology, is to follow the metaphor of CBLocals to describe the imagined community as it circulates in various locations. People, things, plots, biographies and conflicts all provide the context that allows that metaphor to thrive and prosper. Affiliation with CBLocals is the bonding point.

I maintain the importance of developing and executing an integrated ethnography. Liav Sade-Beck (2004) provides an example of such an approach. In her analysis of people bereaving on the Internet, she relied on “online observations, offline (in-person) interviews, and analysis of a mixture of documents: traditional, ‘hard copy’ press, the online press, Internet databases, and so forth” (p. 10). The integrated approach is essentially the only logical response to what is an integrated community: online postings, offline experiences and a variety of recordings and media. I observed all these factors and their relation to the CBLocals theme.
A consequence to an integrated approach is that it inherently produces more data for which the researcher is accountable. It is therefore very important to maintain a tight framework to produce representative results that are nevertheless manageable for a completed criticism. This framework accounts for both time and sequence of data collection.

**How Much is Too Much?**

Examination of published fieldnotes of those such as Malinowski shows us an ethnographer relying on nothing but his pen and paper. In 2007, archiving data is increasingly easier. The job of an ethnographer can become impossible with hours of interview files and computer content to sift through. This documentation is problematic in terms of excess: How much data is too much data? Is ease a good thing methodologically speaking? Henry Wolcott (1999) raises a cautionary flag at this onslaught of data. Technology may simplify tasks once far more time consuming but it may also displace the thought put into deciding what is worthwhile: “everything leads to faster ways to record more data. What we really need are ways to make better decisions about what warrants recording” (p. 169). His comments reveal two difficulties: the ease of obtaining and the unruliness of managing all that is obtained. The CBLocals messageboard features anywhere from 20 to 200 new posts a day—there is no plausible way to give critical thought to each and every posting.

I answered these dilemmas in two ways. First, I limited the timeframe on the study. I conducted three months of fieldwork in Cape Breton, in which I interviewed various participants, attended shows and observed online activity. Native ethnography presented a distinct advantage in this approach: understanding the customs of the CBLocals community and its historical underpinnings is intrinsic in my own personal biography. I have been attending shows in the local area since 1994, have visited CBLocals frequently since its inception, and was involved in
show organization and the local campus radio station from 1995 to 2000. Rather than becoming bogged down with extensive amounts of data, I conducted a limited amount of interviews and website analysis with my own frame of reference as an historical underpinning to its representative accuracy. The examples that I draw upon from these interviews will mostly reference situations that occurred from 2005-7 although other situations will be provided in passing to set up history where needed.

Second, the majority of website and messageboard analysis were sequentially conducted after having completed show attendance and interviews. The emergent themes from the interviews and shows informed a careful search of the archives of CBLocals material. While continuing to monitor the website on an ongoing basis, the primary examples of analysis were extracted until after the relevant themes had been identified. Keyword search functions allowed for easier location of relevant threads that were discussed in multiple interviews. For example, the subject of “emo vs. metal” was easily identified by using the words “emo” and “metal” in a keyword search of the CBLocals messageboard. Also, post counts demonstrated users that contributed often and as well as identifying which users contributed consistently over time.

Another aspect of this project that challenges the traditional ethnographic phase of an exoticized “Other” is the focus on activity in my hometown of Sydney, Nova Scotia. Most ethnographic research prior to the 1990s was conducted in areas completely foreign to the researcher(s) prior to the initiation of their project. Although Malinowski’s rigorous pursuit of the locals in the Triobriand Islands and in Papua as well as his meticulous note-taking remain significant, his diaries (1967) revealed a colonialist attitude towards the Triobrianders. Ethnographers became aware of the thin line separating careful objective observation and reinscription. This danger remains even as the exoticism of one’s ethnographic pursuits fade.
Visitor to Where You Call Home

One may erroneously assume that s/he can speak articulately for the experience of an area simply due to having resided there. Under such pretense, I would risk abandoning the integrated approach of Sade-Beck were I to simply rely upon personal experience. Such work does not constitute traditional ethnography but rather simple recollection or perhaps what some describe as “autoethnography.” There is a line to be drawn between “native ethnography” and autoethnography. I address the potential benefits and downsides inherent to both and describe my work as “native ethnography.”

Exploring Native Ethnography

By studying a community in which I have participated for many years, I am openly violating the “natural science model of research” as John Brewer (2001) describes it: “the natural science model of research does not permit the researcher to become a variable in the experiment” (p. 20). Yet it is inaccurate to describe myself wholly as “researcher” in this project. In order to fully understand my interaction with the subject, we must allow for the understanding of shifting roles in the research project.

Kirin Narayan (1993) questions the term “native ethnography.” She advocates a “dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed...the loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux” (p. 681). The necessity of research protocols for this project clearly identified me as researcher, which possibly then defined me as an outsider to those who chose to participate in the project. However, the level to which this perception existed depended on the participants. At the time of the research, I had not lived in the Cape Breton area on a regular basis since 2003 although I had returned for several visits ranging from 24 to 48 days. Some were not familiar with me before participating whereas
others had known me personally from anywhere from one to more than ten years. Therefore some likely identified me solely as a researcher whereas others were able to call upon me as part of their recollections; as a participant.

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995) paraphrase Burford Junker’s range of field relations to define another helpful scale. The scale ranges from complete participant to participant as observer to observer as participant to complete observer. In this project, I assumed all four roles. The former was revealed in other participants’ observations of me, which made their way into interviews and thus fieldnotes. There were two identifiable advantages to this liminal role: expediency in the interviewing process and an increased possibility of more evocative writing.

Narayan argues a major advantage to studying in one’s own home or community is the ability to understand how to phrase questions to get the answers one wants. In the example of this dissertation, I not only spoke the same language as my participants (English) but I have a familiarity with terminology specific to the CBLocals scene. This familiarity and similarity aided in the process of attaining more in-depth interviews and allowed me a level of trust within social environments such as music shows.

However, the differing levels were also evident in terms of this established trust. For audiences under the age of 19, the advantage disappeared. I became more of a “stranger in town” than I was in attending licensed events. Therefore I was not able to secure many interviews from people who primarily attended all-ages shows. While an admitted shortcoming to this research project, it also provided illumination on the growing divide between generations, which figures prominent in my observations throughout this dissertation. The interviews I
conducted with those under-19 involved more rapport-building questions whereas I had already established this with other scene members.

Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to provide evocative writing aided by my strong familiarity with the topic beyond the immediate research. Clifford Geertz (1973) defines the more detailed writing of events that allows one to truly grasp their contexts as “thick description.” As an example, a “thin” description of a CBLocals show may merely consist of a description of the lineup of bands, the time of day/night and the location. As a resident of the area, I am more able to vividly recall the context that underlies the significance of each of these things. I can describe how a lineup of bands that plays the same genre of music is historically significant as it differs from CBLocals shows in the past, where genres were usually mixed. I can explain how all-ages shows are a significant part of early-evening life for youth but not necessarily of nightlife in general. I can go beyond simply describing a setting as “the St. Mark’s Fire Hall” and discuss its atmosphere and the events otherwise typical of this venue. These details may elude a less seasoned visiting researcher.

As my role in the project shifted on the participant-observer scale, there were inevitably moments that I became the “observed.” Thus parts of the project can be observed as autoethnography. That being said, I do not consider this an autoethnographic project. I argue for autoethnography as an "ethnography of the self" as opposed to an observation of an area familiar to the person. As I call upon my own personal references to provide context, there is undeniably an autoethnographic element to the project.

However, a complete autoethnographic approach carries a variety of drawbacks, ranging from an excess in self-reflexivity to self-indulgent writing. First, this ethnography addresses what has and has not changed for a subcultural community, not just what has changed for me.
individually. “The story of Bryce McNeil” may well be an enlightening study but it will do little to inform our understanding of how music scenes via website participation foster local identity. In the case of CBLocals, focusing the story too much on myself would eliminate a variety of perspectives. For example, I cannot directly relate to the negative effects of the area’s economic underdevelopment. I grew up in an economically secure middle-class family. Furthermore, while I have been attending shows since 1994, I have never been a musical artist or part of a band myself. The lens I provide needs to expand beyond how shows appear as a spectator—interviews with band members as well as privileged access to various band processes (recording, show preparation) are vital to understanding what participating in this scene entails.

The potential for evocative writing is also subject to abuse when the autoethnographic impulse is the overriding presence in a native ethnography. The choice of the CBLocals topic is very personal to me. I feel it is a website and culture worth preserving. This comes through strongly in my writing. Nevertheless, I have no intention of expressing this opinion via extensive personal testimonials or a website of my own under the guise of theoretical debate. Nor will I allow my experiences of the scene to dominate the evocative description. I instead propose a combination of traditional scholarly exposition of theoretical concepts, my own descriptions of events, the quotation of lyrics from various CBLocals artists and extensive quotation from my interview data. Nevertheless, in the interest of attaining thick description, I do detail my relationships to various people and environments throughout the dissertation.

The final element of this equation is exemplified by the edited 1993 work My Music (Crafts, Cavicchi & Keil). This text is framed thematically by the editors—each chapter is devoted to a specific generation of music listener. The text is purely interview content: the research subjects are allowed to speak for themselves rather than having their expressions
paraphrased. This dissertation is a more traditional academic piece. However, I do take the liberty from time-to-time to provide more detailed and lengthy quotations to allow a fuller perspective from scene members. Essentially, the more subjects are allowed to speak for themselves, the lower the risk that I co-opt their opinions as my own or misrepresent them. However, in the interest of protecting anonymity as best as possible, these quotes are removed as far from identifying the specific user as possible.

**Specifics of Methodology**

The integrated approach to the fieldwork of this project involved three elements: interviews, observation of the website and the observation of music and social events.

**Interviews**

55 interviews were conducted from May 2006 to August 2006 in research conducted in accordance with an approved Cape Breton University protocol. I re-approved use of this data in brief interviews with each of these participants in interviews conducted between October 2006 and December 2007 in accordance with an approved Georgia State University protocol. In the process of the new interviews, two subjects withdrew from the project and requested their original interviews not be used in any way. Accordingly, the entirety of their participation was discarded from the data. Three additional interviews were conducted in the summer of 2007. Thus the total number of interviewees whose data is used in this project is 56 individuals.

I have taken the utmost of precaution to make all of the commentary in these interviews anonymous. This was admittedly a difficult task, as many individuals within the scene have unique opinions, personalities and manners of speaking. As such, some of the responses cited in this dissertation are not quoted word-for-word but are paraphrased to protect the identity of the interviewees.
All of the interviews were conducted in person. They occurred in a variety of locations ranging from restaurants to venues (before shows), offices and the homes of the interviewees. Interviewees were encouraged to select the location for the interview so that they would be as comfortable as possible in discussing the scene. For some, this involved a very private location whereas others favored a more public locale. Interviews ranged from one to three hours.

As such, I also decided against providing exact demographics of each interviewee as this would also provide likely hints or clues to CBLocals community members as to “who said what.” However, the numbers of the interviewees break down as follows:

1) 41 of the 56 interviewees were men; indicative of the dominance of men participating within the scene.

2) Five interviewees were under 19 years of age at the time of their original interview, 29 were between the ages of 19-25, 17 were between the ages of 26-30 and five were above 30 years of age. There were few users above the age of 30 to sample, whereas there were ample number of teenagers at shows, but few were interested in volunteering for the project.

3) 34 of the interviewees were either active or former performers in the CBLocals music scene.

4) 17 of the interviewees had participated in the organization and promotion of at least one show during their time within the scene.

5) Nine of the interviewees had either moderated the CBLocals messageboard or had made some contribution to the CBLocals website as an administrator (admin) at some point in their time in the scene.
6) Eleven of the interviewees identified themselves primarily as attendees of events, with no musical or promotional ties to the scene and with no musical endeavors of their own before or during the time of their interview.

**Website Observation**

Website observation consisted of three parts:

a) an initial survey, consisting of keyword searches and post frequency searches, to determine users that are influential and identifiable among the CBLocals community. Webmaster Harry Doyle provided assistance in this matter by providing a database of the CBLocals guestbook, which has been defunct since the fall of 2002.

b) the time frame of May 2006-August 2006 was loosely monitored during the interview process to verify events in real time. Since users can edit threads, I saved copies of various threads to ensure that the original posting data was preserved. However, this was not a foolproof method as several edits occurred very rapidly and outside of my monitoring time.

c) an extensive review of postings from May 2006-August 2006 upon completion of interviews, coupled with a review of threads from 2005-2007 that were cited in interviews. This review was done to verify and investigate past events or threads that are raised during interviews.

Whereas interview data has been kept completely anonymous, quotes from the website and forum are traced to their original usernames. The simplest reason for this is that a simple search through the CBLocals archives traces each quote back to their user, ergo eliminating any secrecy beforehand. In situations where users are highly identified on the messageboard by their
actual name, it is cited in this dissertation. However, whenever referring to someone's actions on the messageboard or website, I describe them by their username first and foremost.

One last important note is that messageboard posts were rife with misspellings and grammatical errors. Each quote from this paper is as close as possible to how it originally appeared on the CBLocals messageboard with a few that are truncated for formatting purposes. Thus these misspellings and grammatical errors remain.

**Show and Activity Observation**

From May to August 2006, I participated in observation and comprised fieldnotes during 35 bar shows and 10 all-ages events in the industrial Cape Breton area. I also participated in a variety of gatherings not pertaining to music that centered on users of the CBLocals website. For example, many users gathered to play frisbee or softball. A small number of users gathered at The Upstairs to watch results of the provincial election. Of course, I also draw upon personal experience in the CBLocals scene dating back to 1994 to inform my historical perspective on the subject.

As per my interviews, any quotes from subjects that occurred during private or casual conversation in this environment are kept anonymous. This anonymity does not apply to any comments made by onstage by performers or promoters before an audience, as this constitutes a public environment.

**CHAPTER LAYOUT**

This dissertation explains that the CBLocals music remains similar in social composition and ideological outlook despite the users' feelings that the scene has changed immensely because of the website specifically and the Internet generally. During the course of the following
chapters, I explore structural, social and emotional facets of the scene and ways in which they are affected and unaffected by the website.

The second chapter focuses on social composition in CBLocals. In particular, I focus on how the scene “hails” a certain social composition. Despite the promise of “disembodiment” that the Internet possesses, the social and cultural makeup of the CBLocals scene—both on and offline—is still typical of most indie rock scenes in North America. Hence, the website is seen as having little effect, positive or negative, on the social groupings within the community.

The third chapter addresses the boundaries between amateurism and professionalism within the CBLocals scene. This analysis reveals that there is a gap in our understanding of professionalism within music. There are not only dilettantes, amateurs and professionals, but distinctions of state-supported vs. non-state-supported commercialism. Furthermore, local and national debates on the state’s role in supporting art puts discussions of “selling out” in a different light in Cape Breton than it would be placed in a typical indie rock scene. I conclude that local context, moreso than new media or globalism, affects the debate on selling out in CBLocals.

The fourth chapter is an overview of the ambivalence of the CBLocals userbase in assessing the intersection of offline and online activities. I find that most users are alternately excited and disappointed with how the website has affected the community. Specifically, I analyze how the users visualize the website and messageboard in terms of signal-to-noise ratio, promotion, the growth of the community and the interaction between scene members. Discussion about the website and forum reveal a conflict between the nostalgia for traditional community and the idealization of a utopian technological community.
In the final chapter, I summarize these findings and present avenues for future research. These suggestions re-state the importance of evaluating music scenes in their current form: as integrations of offline and online activities. The dissertation’s findings are summarized in three significant contributions: social groupings are not challenged by online forums, local context remains important in describing how music scenes function, and perspectives of the Internet can be summarized neither by utopian or dystopian perspectives but rather by feelings of ambivalence. These findings contribute to the overall suggestion that the Internet has reshaped how music scenes and community function, yet at the same time, it has left us with communities that remain similar in terms of social and cultural makeup.
CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF CBLOCALS

In my generation, we have global attitudes, but we’re still pretty white, still pretty isolated.

- A CBLocals user describes the demographics of the community.

In this chapter, I discuss social composition in the CBLocals scene. Some of the disparities between groups on CBLocals are visibly evident, such as generational clashes and the differing numbers of men and women participating. Other social groups are so invisible in the scene; no one identifies them as members of the community. My interviews revealed that many users believe that individuals on CBLocals behave differently online than they do offline. That perception may be true but the CBLocals website and messageboard still portray a fairly accurate picture of what social groups do or do not have influence within the community on and offline.

This chapter describes the influential figures, both online and offline, to provide a context with which we can understand how the scene functions. I discuss various social divisions and discuss whether or not these groups are marginalized both on the CBLocals website and in the community. These divisions include race, gender, region, class, sexuality and age. In surveying literature written about social groups on the Internet, we discover online interaction often mirrors offline interaction.

SOCIAL COMPOSITION ON THE INTERNET

A utopian vision of online communities is the eradication of the constraints of the body, in the vision of Dery's (1993) "disembodied self." One might adopt a gender-neutral identity in online forums to circumvent sexist attitudes from the offline world. Yet the online world remains steeped in the politics of social groupings that emerge in the day-to-day setting of users. Early research suggests that various categorizations of users offline remain important even when they move to the online world.
For example, I cited Norma Coates (1998) in Chapter 1. In her research of women's participation in online forums on rock music, Coates suggests that women cannot escape their gender when they enter forums on music. The subject eventually raises itself and women find themselves either excluded or dismissed when expressing their opinion. Literature suggests that social groupings do not diminish in significance when users move from the outside world to an online forum.

Rohit Lekhi (2000) argues that race also does not disappear online. He reasons that the Internet intensifies rather than subverts socioeconomic disadvantage for African Americans. He finds little evidence of the Internet assisting in the mobilization of either political activism or a decrease in the political alienation of African American citizens. He attributes this to the political economy. African-Americans cannot claim much actual ownership over the Internet and therefore there is still subjugation: “White-owned web portals are simply the latest means by which whites have sought to censor African American communicative interaction” (p. 54). He concludes that the Internet actually divides African American communities as they are drawn by the petty squabbling provoked on online forums rather than by the hope for grassroots organization.

Yet at least one significant scholar in new media suggests users can rally around negative online communication trends to claim their place in communities. For instance, T.L. Taylor (2003) finds that women work against the grain of marketing in the online gaming community. Even as designers imagine “pink games” to appeal to women, they resist limiting themselves to these and pursue games intended largely for men. “When you revisit the numbers of women playing…the figures are actually quite remarkable given they are not the demographic being
targeted. In many ways, women play *despite* the game” (p. 40). These results suggest that there are examples in which users *are* hailed by online spaces not designed with them in mind.

Toby Miller (2004) argues that this is problematic, however, if one considers the lifespan of a cultural commodity rather than the person(s) using them. Under these circumstances, he notes that "new subjectivity online" withers:

(Let's) return to the romantic figure (of)...the woman constructing a new subjectivity online who is celebrated by cultural studies as resisting corporate capital's attempts to 'fix' her identity as a female consumer. How about taking to the next phase and asking her to look backward and forwards in the life of the commodity she is using, to think of the female subjectivities that are available to 16-year old girls who leave villages in northern China to work in a remittance economy, building computers in effectively indentured compounds run by Japanese, Taiwanese and US businesses in the South?...what of these female subjectivities? (p. 63).

So, Miller argues, while females may play "despite the game," the denial of female subjectivities *surrounding* the game continue.

Even if anonymity did offer the possibility of new subjectivities, this lessens when geographical specific interests fuel online gatherings. All of the aforementioned examples of online community are geographically non-specific. While members of various social groupings may break free from various social expectations in online community, this leap is likely more difficult in a geographically constrained area. Even though there are anonymous users on CBLocals, few escape without being detected. As more than one interviewee put it, “here, everybody knows everybody.” Therefore, the Internet has likely facilitated, but not radically
changed, what we see in social attitudes and groupings in the CBLocals community. The CBLocals music scene prior to the website predominately consisted of white, lower-to-middle-class men. It largely remained so in 2006.

Furthermore, it has been argued that even if anonymity is possible, it is no way to break through sensitive cultural divides, especially in forums. Jonathan Paul Marshall (2007) notes that invisibility only allows one to build social status online so as long as one stays silent on the very issues that make invisibility significant. He monitored conversation on the Cybermind Internet Mailing List specifically devoted to the topics of racism and sexism. Despite the group’s professed anti-sexist, anti-racist attitude, he discovered tremendous hostilities emerged over the subject. Once these subjects were raised, it became difficult to establish one’s credibility without comprising invisibility or remaining quiet on dissenting opinions:

Events like these show that being online by itself does not allow people to discuss all the issues which affect them. People who claim outsider and critical positions, especially when they are not established in the group, will tend to be ignored, because they have not established their credentials or relationships with others, and the only way they can establish expertise is by staying silent on the issues which mark them as outsider or critical. (p. 81)

How can we account for Taylor’s story—an exception to studies that demonstrate striking similarities for the treatment of gender, race and class on and offline? Some within the debate attribute the similarities to structural issues. Paul Dimaggio et. al (2001) and Philip Agre (1998) argue that social implications of the Internet are highly dependent how the Internet has been institutionalized by greater social structures. Agre suggests that “the cultural system of myths and ideas that our society projects onto the technology” (p. 19) shapes discussion of
Internet communities. Dimaggio et. al call for more policy-related research: “Social science remains the best hope for substituting knowledge for myth and informing public discourse about current conditions and policy alternative” (p. 329). In short, they are concerned scholars do not account for how government policy-making affects the outcome of how the Internet actually functions.

Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000), as well as Samuel Wilson and Leighton Peterson (2002), make a different argument. They focus on cultural effects rather than policy. They acknowledge Dimaggio et. al’s work on policy effect but also argue for information technology as cultural (re)production. Wilson and Peterson agree that life is not exactly as it was before the Internet. Even if there is no visible progression of utopia or regression to dystopia from the offline world, there is still change worthy of identifying and investigating. Yet they argue that we ultimately must use the same tools for analyzing social composition as used by social science disciplines prior to the Internet:

The realization has grown that though online communication may happen faster, over larger distances, and may bring about the reformulation of some existing power relationships, the rapid and fundamental transformations of society that some foresaw have not come to pass…on the other hand, the social uses of the Internet, in the few years of its existence, have been astonishing and almost completely unanticipated by those who began networking computers in the 1960s (p. 462).

Regardless of whether one focuses on policy or on cultural conditions emergent from new technologies, a consensus emerges there are still significant ways that society has not transformed. CBLocals has impacted the scene in a number of ways— changing infrastructure
and increasing communication in a geographically sprawled area. However, I posit that—as per these scholars’ suggestions—the social composition of the CBLocals scene remains unchanged. The site reflects more so than it affects how people are hailed or not hailed to the scene. Both online and offline interactions reflect the same reality of CBLocals: a group of primarily white men in an area of the country perceived as antiquated in its approach to gender, race and class.

I observed this unchanging social composition within CBLocals not only in the attendance of shows and on the messageboard, but in the various hierarchies that support the scene. There are people who exercise great influence on the scene as musical performers, some as online moderators, others as venue owners and some participate in more than one role. Describing these structures in 2006 not only allows us to see a predominantly white middle-class male composition, but also gives us a snapshot of the scene in that time.

FUNCTIONS OF POWER—ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Research suggests that no scene operates without producing a hierarchy. Matthew Stahl (2003) suggests this is ironic given the subcultural status of many scenes. Stahl writes of the San Francisco rock scene, “the social spaces created by this group for the attenuation of heteronymous principles of hierarchization depended for their efficacy on the construction of other, intragroup principles of hierarchization” (p. 141). In other words, even though many scenes in rock music emerge as resistance to "the man," someone, or some group of people, eventually becomes "the man" within the resistant scene in order to develop a sense of coherence and function.

Socialization within a scene tends to move in a circular process: social relationships help to create hierarchy which dictates how people interact with each other, which continues a cycle in which people work in and out of the hierarchy. In the case of CBLocals, these intragroup
principles established a hierarchy prior to the creation of the website. The website and messageboard have made hierarchization within the music scene more visible yet much of the social and structural influence accumulated prior to the Internet's popularity remains.

Disagreements between musicians, promoters, fans and moderators are often rooted in dissatisfaction with the various power structures within the scene. Some of my interviewees described the CBLocals scene in idealistic egalitarian language ("open to all," "anyone can get involved"). Yet there still remained imbalances of both organizational power and influence. Both the online and offline venues yielded a certain degree of power. There are functions of power within the website, the messageboard, venues, show organization, artists and fans.

The hierarchy of the CBLocals community operates in two hierarchical circles. There are those who have authority and credibility within the online forum—be it as admins, moderators or respected posters. There are those who have authority and credibility offline as performers and promoters. Some are highly associated with CBLocals because of their involvement in both areas, as admins or moderators in the online universe, while acting as musicians or organizers in the offline world.

It is immediately evident that the offline hierarchy of the CBLocals community affected the construction of the online community by looking at the history of its founder. Harry Doyle founded the CBLocals website in 1997. He was not unknown among local musicians and promoters. In fact, he was already involved with three of the most popular bands in the still developing CBLocals scene (although that term would not describe it at the time): Tilted, Blindside (who later became Nothing to Say) and 77 Impala Special. Tilted was punk rock, Nothing to Say was poppier punk rock and 77 Impala Special shared sound resemblances to
both. All-ages (AA) shows in the mid-1990s attracted audiences ranging from 50-300 people and these bands often attracted the lion’s share of the attention from participants.

Doyle’s role as the founder of the site combined with his role as musician made him the most recognized participant in the music scene. As such, his website became an organizing point for the scene even though many users felt that Harry likely did not intend it to happen this way. One member of the 1990s CBLocals scene recalled:

> It wasn’t like a real cultural project where he wanted to include everybody. It was some guys in bands that wanted people to come to the shows…but as soon as you had five people, then you get a broader range of people. And I think that’s what happened.

The website’s popularity within the scene was presented as a very organic phenomenon. Harry started a site expecting repeat visits due to the updated content, all the while anticipating a number of corresponding sites that would please those dissatisfied with CBLocals. Over time, however, Locals became the hub. Doyle’s status within the scene as a musician and skateboarder likely helped to attract viewers to the site, as one former skateboarder recollected:

> I think Harry was definitely one of the top skaters at that point, and Harry was also in the bands that everybody loved. He took his two loves and realised there were a lot of people that held those things as dear as he did. So he capitalized on it. “Capitalized” is an odd word because he doesn’t have any money!

Most credited Harry as a scene forefather for this reason. They also credited him for helping develop the infrastructure that allowed the scene to move forward. “First of all, the bar owners should ensure that Harry Doyle should never have to pay to go to a show for the rest of
his life,” said one promoter, “second, they should help him financially to keep that page running.”

Harry was not the only participant who held this forefather status among users for being a significant part of CBLocals inception. Sean MacGillvary, identified as poorhaus by the users, had contributed to Harry’s website from the beginning. His “SEANRants” were popular. “I remember liking one of them so much, I printed it out and put it on my wall,” one interviewee recalled. Sean was also in Nothing to Say and had fronted the bands Crazy Knees Carbone and Shane Brown Fan Club. He assisted Harry with redesigns, designating server space and other technical issues. When he moved to Halifax in the late-1990s, HalifaxLocals became the first point of Locals expansion.

As Doyle retained the title of CBLocals owner and founder, he remained visibly atop the CBLocals hierarchy. MacGillvary was not too far behind as he moderated the CBLocals messageboard in 2006, plus was continually visible updating the HalifaxLocals website and moderating its board. Other people significant in the website’s inception had faded from sight both on and offline. Mark Black, whose “Just Another Teenage Anthem” zine had been hosted on Locals, was no longer involved in moderation or administration. Mike Slaven and Marc Musial were identified as members of the Chatsubo design team that housed CBLocals. I saw neither's input during my fieldwork.

Contentiousness over CBLocals was rarely pinned specifically to Doyle, but MacGillvary was a visible target for banned users. Many complaints about the site were indirectly interpreted by veteran users as an attack on Doyle. Two people who visited CBLocals since 1997 or 1998 found it irritating; as this veteran of the scene did:
He's hosted this website, created an encyclopaedia that he spent *months* working on. Every free moment. He's done so much for the scene, it's ridiculous. To have these snot-nosed drunken 17 year olds tell him off is so disrespectful...it infuriates me!...it doesn't make any sense to me. The reason these kids are able to go to these shows and drink like idiots and lose venues is because (of) people before them.

Doyle had clearly put less effort into the most recent five years of the webpage as he had the first five. He spent the majority of his time on CBLocals assisting with messageboard moderation. He had not altered the design of the actual website itself since 2002. One promoter was amused that an image promoting *Gobblefest 9* (held in 2002) still came up from time-to-time on the corepage. Updates to the photo database have almost ground to a halt: fewer than 200 of the nearly 3000 pictures on the site have been added since my fieldwork was completed. The audio section was inactive during my fieldwork and was disabled in 2008.

Getting official power within the CBLocals structure meant (and still means) directly contacting Harry. Harry decided who would be given administrative (admin) power to make updates to the website or moderation power to lock threads and ban user accounts on the messageboard. Admins held a significant amount of power as they were the ones who advertised events in a primary source of information for the scene. This power could then be used to significantly self-promote one's events and music.

Morgan Currie, who users identified as morgan, was fairly new to the scene when he first gained admin privileges. He joined Nothing to Say concurrent to this time. Many years later, as a member of the House of Rock collective, he was promoting various Tom Fun shows with his admin account “House of Rock.” Joe Costello, identified as joe on the messageboard, used his
admin status to both promote and review his shows under his admin account “Under the Underground.” Joe had promoted shows for over a year before he had been granted this privilege.

Only admins could post to the corepage but the messageboard by its very definition was subject to multiple contributors. poorhaus used his power as CBLocals moderator to lock several threads and ban user accounts. The moderators of the CBLocals messageboard can direct or re-direct conversations with these tools although it is impossible to completely ensure the elimination of a given user under the current structure. The only verification for a username is a working email address which has led several banned users to adopt new addresses to continue posting. Harry had used other moderators in the past, such as james (identified by users as skateboarder James Gillan) and hitokiri (identified by users as bassist/Improv U member Clayton D’orsay).

In the meantime, there were several people who demonstrated their power within the scene without being seen. They were the people who decided on renting out venues to promoters and bands. I learned early in my fieldwork that these arrangements were tenuous and subject to change.

On May 20th, 2006, I found myself at my first AA show of my fieldwork at the Ukranian Parish Hall. Church halls had long been venues for AA shows and remain so. The room in the hall was vast, so much so that it made the crowd of 90-100 people seem like a smattering of people. The men outnumbered the women in the audience by roughly a three-to-two count to see an all-male lineup. The feature act, the Ontario screamo rock/metal band Rosesdead were received enthusiastically by the teenage audience, who dutifully thrashed their heads during the band’s short but energetic set.
The event was promoted under the banner Under the Underground, the promotional name assumed by Joe Costello. Costello had originally intended for the show to be at the only venue where I had ever known AA shows in Whitney Pier to be staged, the Polish Village. There had been a 12-band all ages show there only one month earlier. The details of why shows stopped at Polish Village were never made public, but Joe Costello posted on the Locals messageboard the following reason: “promoter kicking in the door and liquor inside the venue.”

This incident reminded me that although show organizers appear to be on the highest level of hierarchy within the scene, they remained beholden to venue owners. These owners have their own concerns and they often are not the best interests of the music scene but rather venue preservation (church hall) or maximum attendance (bars). The show promoters negotiate their interests based on what venue opportunities are presented to them. Costello had made enemies with participants like CBLocals user kickstab, who had been ejected from a show for behavior that Costello felt might jeopardize the property at the venue.

Costello never staged another show at the Ukranian Hall. There was an incident of property defacement in the men’s washroom. The renters of the hall decided against any more rock shows in their venue.

AA shows within CBLocals in the summer of 2006 were chiefly staged at church and fire halls where there was no profit motive for the organizations that rented out the building. The most frequently used locations were the Sydney River Fire Hall and the St. Anne’s Church Hall. Community organizations ran these locations and show organizers had to appeal to them to have a location for their shows. While not participating visibly in the scene, the owners of these venues possessed direct power and also derived financial capital when they charged rental fees.
The most visible promoters in the AA scene in the summer of 2006 were Joe Costello (Under the Underground) and a group of teenagers known as Start the Show. These organizers were often faced with the choice of whether or not to exercise power in order to please the demands of the venue owners. A running issue within the AA community was “losing venues.” The phrase communicates the trend of church and community hall owners refusing to rent out their space to anyone staging a music event (or, alternatively, a rock music event) due to an incident perceived to threaten their property—such as defacement—or illegal activity such as underage drinking.

Basement shows were an alternative to this power structure but none were publicized during my fieldwork. A 1990s promoter spoke of arranging basement shows during his late-teens and early 20s and even charging attendance for some. For younger participants, this was a risky endeavor as it involved using their guardians’ property to stage shows and therefore risking disciplinary measures. However, shortly after my fieldwork, one teenager promoted a gathering of bands playing on his family’s summer property. These shows were rare but provided a glimpse of how participants tried to subvert the capital structure within the scene that could provide roadblocks for gathering multiple bands to play.

For the AA scene, there were no establishments of private business models based on showcasing CBLocals music. The only AA shows I attended at commercial venues were a “Battle of the Bands” at the Savoy Theatre and a sparsely attended show at Ed’s Indoor Play in North Sydney. Start the Show decided to save profits from their shows for the purposes of aiding a single band’s recording efforts. Joe Costello had no stated objective aside from recouping expenses to pay away bands and make up for lost revenues from other shows. Most interviewees argued that the incentive for AA promoters was to attempt breaking even moreso
than making money. (Not everyone agreed, as I detail in Chapter 3). The venue rental ranged from $100 to $300 and bringing in an “away” act capable of drawing crowds could cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. As AA shows typically attracted no more than 200 people and participants balked at most shows exceeding a $5-8 price tag, this made the continuous booking of AA shows a dicey financial proposition.

Both Costello and Start the Show promoted “screamo”/emo bands at their shows with a smattering of metal and acoustic acts. The most popular bands among AA followers were Richmond Hill and Drowning Shakespeare. Booking these bands guaranteed a larger audience than a show dedicated to the next most popular genre within the scene, metal. Punk/metal act Violent Theory attracted a slightly smaller crowd when they played. Athymia was the most visible representation of the metal scene I observed, although they tended to draw 40-50 people to the front of the room where Drowning Shakespeare might draw 80-100. The most popular acoustic act was 16 year old Danny MacNeil, who attracted modest crowds of 20-40 people when he played.

You could see seniority play a significant role in the AA scene to a smaller degree. Tony McQuaid fronted Richmond Hill and his experience within the scene dated back to his time in pop-punk band Face Down. However, genres played a more significant role in the AA scene. Bands that played music of an emo/scream or pop-punk variety were able to attract audiences. Drowning Shakespeare had its critics both within the scene and among visiting bands but, as one person that observed the AA scene for years noted, putting them on a bill assured a larger audience:

I remember one band coming to town and really dissing Drowning Shakespeare. I mean, not to their face or anything, but I think they made some sort of snide
comment about emo or whatever. And I thought “y’know, the only reason anyone is here is to see them.” If you came here without Drowning Shakespeare, there’d be no show.

There were a variety of participants within the AA scene of varying influence although they were not as visible during my fieldwork. Significantly, only a handful of attendees were over the age of 19. Gillian Hillier was involved with AA promotion although I only saw her assist Costello at a couple of shows. One AA show that stood out from the others was an all-acoustic coffeehouse show staged by Cape Breton University group Caper Radio. Many of these participants, such as Brent Martin, James F.W. Thompson, Erin Gillis and Andrew Rutherford, were more visible at Improv U shows than at other all-ages events. Lorne Tompkins and Remy Tartaglia, identified as Dropkick Tompkins and remyzero on the messageboard, were known offline for their role in metal band The Bloodletting. They were originally from Cheticamp and had played a key role in organizing events in that area. With no event in Cheticamp during my fieldwork and diminishing interest in emo music, they were not as active organizationally although I did see them at a handful of shows as patrons.

Unlike the AA scene, the owners of licensed establishments had differing levels of engagement with the local music scene. Some of these establishments developed their clientele hand-in-hand with the development of the CBLocals scene. Interviewees viewed Bunker’s, The Upstairs and The Maple Leaf as venues that typically catered to the CBLocals scene. On the other hand, participants had mixed feelings about the use of Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s, which were viewed as "popular bars." All of the bars in which I saw CBLocals bands play were in the downtown area, the furthest distance separating any two being 1.2 km/3/4 of a mile (See
Figure 1). Despite their close proximity, not all of the bars were considered significant locations of CBLocals culture.

Bunker's, over the course of the late-1990s onward, became a favored location for Locals patrons to both play and watch their favorite band play. The venue faced the Sydney waterfront and was upstairs from Governor’s restaurant. The Maple Leaf was a restaurant on Charlotte Street that had suspended staging shows for over a year. Rod Gale and Darryl MacKinnon were now working with the restaurant owners to stage local music shows there again.

The Upstairs was located on the corner of Ferry and Dublin Street, somewhat removed from the other venues in the “north end” of Sydney. The Upstairs had previously been known as the French Club in the late 1990s/early 2000s. Its location was considered by many of my interviewees to be a “sketchy” part of town. Of the three “CBLocals friendly” bars, only the Upstairs had an actual stage, which was actually only a few inches removed from the ground.

I refer to Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s as the “popular bars” largely due to the wider clientele they attracted. They were one block removed from each other near the end of Charlotte Street. Herman’s was the largest physically. I could not establish what the fire code was but the wide room was divided into an upper and lower level with two bar areas. There was also a full stage for the band and a patio for patrons that wished to smoke. Nova Scotia laws forbid smoking inside venues. Daniel’s also featured a patio and a full stage although the space was significantly smaller with no differing levels and only one bar area. I estimated that Herman’s could fit 500-600 for a show whereas Daniel’s could likely fit 200-300.

Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s primarily featured “cover bands,” much to the derision of CBLocals participants. (More on this in Chapter 3). Their increasing reliance on House of Rock bands such as Slowcoaster and Tom Fun Orchestra reflected a desire to reach out to patrons they
Figure 1: Bar Show Locations in Downtown Sydney, 2006

(Map designed by Steven Rolls, 2009)

U – Upstairs       B – Bunkers       M – Maple Leaf       D – Daniel's       S – Smooth Herman's
were not attracting. However, the base of their attendance was pre-established. During the many shows I attended at these venues, it was common to see hundreds of patrons drinking, talking and completely ignoring the musicians on stage. One attendee sarcastically remarked to me upon watching Rock Ranger play to a group of disinterested Daniel’s patrons, “I wonder how Rock Ranger feels about taking money from people who didn’t come to see them.”

The HOR’s relationship with the “popular bars” was sustained by the accessibility of two of its feature acts, Slowcoaster and Tom Fun Orchestra. As Tom Fun was a cacophony of instruments featuring violin, banjo and stand up bass, it was a more danceable act and even reminiscent of some traditional Celtic music that younger non-CBLocals patrons associated with the area. Slowcoaster was far and away the most popular local band by my observation. Its music had been alternately described as funk, rock-based dance or “white boy reggae” (Bowden, 2006). As such, their music was more accessible to a wide audience not accustomed to regularly attending rock shows.

At venues like the Upstairs, Bunker’s and the Maple Leaf, I saw a wide variety bands unassociated with the House of Rock. The most active was “dirty rock” band, The Downfall, fronted by the Dauphnee brothers. The Dauphnee brothers had been involved with the CBLocals scene in its infancy but had only recently returned to the area from western Canada. Aaron Corbett was also very active, both as an acoustic performer and as a member of pop-rock band Airport. These acts attracted either a handful of patrons or 30-40 people depending on the night I viewed them.

The visible promoters in the bar scene were the House of Rock, Rod Gale and Darryl MacKinnon. Joe Costello promoted one bar show during my fieldwork, as a follow-up to an AA show. Some bands promoted for themselves, as The Downfall did for the majority of their
shows. The House of Rock was a promotional organization with a headquarters on Charlotte Street above the local smoke and skateboard shops. Darren Gallop had organized the team, helping to solicit government grants to fund recordings and employ people over the summer to work with the bands to set up shows and a summer tour across Canada.

Many of the people involved with the House of Rock had been involved with the scene for a long time. Gallop had been in Bemus Tun, a pop-rock band of the late 1990s with Mikey LeLievre, who had now been in Slowcoaster for over seven years. Former Slowcoaster drummer Devon Strang handled the bands’ scheduling. He had been involved in the scene for over a decade, dating back to his time in Red Noise. Dave Mahalik played with Tom Fun and helped with promotion, he had originally been involved in the scene as the editor of local music/events weekly publication What’s Goin’ On. Rock Ranger drummer Mike Morrison played the original Gobblefest in 1995 and been involved in the scene ever since. Morgan Currie played violin for Tom Fun Orchestra and had been the bassist for popular quasi math-rock band I Was a Spy.

Rod Gale had returned home for the summer and, along with Darryl MacKinnon, was putting together lineups for Maple Leaf shows. Darryl also arranged some Bunker's shows. Each promoter had been involved with the scene for over a decade and I had known each of them for almost as long. As members of Caper Radio, they were the promoters for the original Gobblefest. They were instrumental in putting together the first CD compilations of artists. As 1/3 of Crack! Industries, he helped oversee the production of the Remnants EP in 1997. Darryl assembled the first full-length CD compilation of scene bands in 1999, The Long Wall.

The bands they booked were far less accessible than HOR bands. The shows were not frequent enough to sustain a wage; they staged three shows over the summer and attendance ranged from 30 to 100 people. I determined that Darryl and Rod were more likely to book “up
and coming” acts within the scene, such as metal/hard rock band Centralia, funk-jam band Madame Brown and acoustic act Alyce MacLean.

My personal knowledge of the interviewees was emblematic of my interview pool. AA participants were shy to participate and I had no idea if any of them knew who Rod and Darryl were. My few interviews with AA participants and attendees suggested that they probably did not although they may have recognized one or the other from their messageboard names.

I summarize who I feel were some of the “power players” within the scene offline in 2006: The owners of the “popular bars,” Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s, exercised a great deal of power as they operated key hubs of social activity within industrial Cape Breton. As such, HOR bands, especially Tom Fun Orchestra and Slowcoaster, were particularly influential within the scene as they had access to the greatest audience because these bars favored them. Darren Gallop was seen as the “head” of the HOR, as he was credited with setting up much of the organizational structure. However, Morgan Currie (identified as morgan) was the most visible face of the House of Rock online. Darryl MacKinnon and Rod Gale were scene elders who organized shows at the Maple Leaf and their influence was significant. They held the most influence over shows booked at venues outside of the popular bars in the summer of 2006.

Joe Costello and Start the Show were primary power holders within the AA scene as they had gained the trust of various church and community hall owners to stage their shows. With the continuing threat of losing venues, this power became significant as “not just anyone” was able to book shows at various venues if owners did not deem them trustworthy. Drowning Shakespeare and Richmond Hill yielded a great deal of influence on these bookers as they were the only bands to guarantee a significant crowd among AA attendees during the summer of 2006.
Sean MacGillvary, as poorhaus, accumulated a great deal of social capital among users both for his role with the website and as a musician. Most users over the age of 25 considered Sean a friend and tended to be sympathetic towards his actions. Sean had lived in Halifax since 1998 thereby reducing his social cache among younger users. This was also the source of regional tension, which I discuss later in this chapter.

**RACE & ETHNICITY**

During my entire time in the CBLocals scene, I have encountered only a handful of participants that are not white. I grew up only a five minute drive from a Mi’Kmaq reservation yet I have seldom ever witnessed Native representation at a show. Growing up, Whitney Pier (or simply "the Pier" to most of my friends) was considered "the black area" of Cape Breton although this reference was usually underwritten with the understanding that there were still predominantly white residents in the area. Whenever I went to the Pier for a show— which was seldom— I never saw this representation at shows. My experience of the CBLocals scene was—and still is— very much a white experience.

Camille and Charmaine Nelson (2004) argue that in Canada "white people are just people, everybody else is raced." (p. 3). They attribute this partially to "the nation-building process in Canada (being) the management of racial populations by competing British and French colonial interests" (p. 4). Hence, they argue that Euro-Canadians tend to assume their experience of race is shared across the nation. The articulation of tensions between English and French tend to receive more media attention than racial tensions and discussions of nationality focus on resolving these anxieties. The CBLocals scene is a microcosm for this state of "invisible whiteness." The scene is an intersection of a white national identity (Canadian) and a musical
expression of whiteness (indie rock) portrayed as a counterculture to another European imaginary (Scottishness).

Rock music is presented as a very white music despite roots in African American blues. In particular, local independent rock music is often categorized under the “indie rock” umbrella, although not necessarily by CBLocals users (some of whom reject this term). This type of music privileges “white masculinities” according to Matthew Bannister (2006). It typically encourages the participation of men over women and involves almost no participation from those of color. Bannister traces this trend to a rejection from indie music communities of musical advances associated with the black community, such as disco or rap, which are rejected for hypersexuality and conflicting with a celebrated image of folk authenticity:

Indie culture was suspicious of the perceived rate of change (technological and other) in black music, which served as damning evidence of its technologisation and commodification, very much like the folk music critique of mass culture. This discourse of indie technological dystopianism can, again, be read in terms of (purity and archivalism)...this can be glossed as both necessity (old gear may be cheaper and more accessible) and as more authentic – the sounds produced are non-commercial, and therefore better. (p. 89)

Simon Frith (1981) traces the understanding of rock music as “white” in comparison to R&B (arguably the most influential predecessor of rap) to rock’s literary roots in comparison to R&B’s bodily roots. Rock music, he argues, was thought to be about individuality and the criteria for this were established in the 1960s as a literary one, with popular artists such as Bob Dylan and Paul Simon. Literary individuality eventually evolved into an emphasis on “artfulness” over being too direct as R&B was:
By the 1970s there was a general stress in rock on artfulness, on individualized skills, on “unnatural” (because personalized) accounts of experience; even blues groups were, following Cream, emphasizing technical rather than emotional expertise. Black music was, in this context, thought to be too direct; its very vocal qualities were what made it essentially incapable of artistic progression (p. 21).

Bannister posits rap as the most recent development in the black tradition and it is also among the most commercially popular genres of music in North America. I therefore find it significant that none of the shows I attended involved hip hop or rap music. There were mentions of local rap artists on the CBLocals messageboard but seldom on the CBLocals website itself. Messageboard threads concerning local rap artists featured few replies and almost no users raised the subject of local rap. This has evolved since my fieldwork, with artists such as Matt Nokes and Sick Kookies developing a slightly larger following within the community. All of these artists and the majority of their supporters are comprised of white people within the community.

The CBLocals website and forum does not intentionally ostracize blacks within the area, although it is not entirely out of the realm of possibility that they would perceive it that way. My interviews reveal the Internet did not affect how regional context impacted how users interpreted issues of cultural diversity. In their eyes, CBLocals was a diverse place given the constraints of the geographical location in terms of both a predominantly white population and a heavily promoted Scottish imaginary.

The Cape Breton area is largely white and even if the Internet hailed participation from people of color within the community, they would still comprise the minority of participants. A
December 2003 study used the Richard Florida “creative cities” model to compare 14 urban areas in Canada. Cape Breton ranked last in both the Mosaic and Bohemian indexes, which respectively track foreign born population and employment in “creative occupations.” Conversely, Halifax placed in the middle of these scales, which likely contributes to the rifts I later discuss concerning social class and the CBLocals and Halifax music scenes. Nevertheless, even from the small pool of visible minorities present on Cape Breton Island, the CBLocals website and music community draws few.

Only one user identifies themselves as black on the board. No other visible minorities identified themselves. No one self-identified as native despite Sydney neighboring the Membertou Mi`Kmaq and Eskasoni reserves. Furthermore, some users recounted the role that CBLocals played in reaching the Highlands area of Cape Breton, specifically Cheticamp. No one mentioned this influence reaching native areas near those locations, specifically Wagmatcook and Waycobah. I saw no participants of color at any of the AA (AA) shows and very few at the bar shows.

This lack of participation was unaffected by location within the industrial area. Even those areas with a diverse population failed to attract visible diversity to CBLocals shows. In the early 1900s, the Dominion Iron and Steel Company aggressively recruited a heavy number of black workers to start their company. While the majority of these workers emigrated back to the U.S., the company also recruited workers from the West Indies; many of their descendents remain in that area today (MacDougall, 2004). Hence the aforementioned reputation for Whitney Pier as “black area” of Cape Breton. Yet at the one AA show I attended in this area (at the Ukrainian Parish Hall), the lack of racial diversity remained. The recently developed Membertou Convention Centre hosted no shows posted on CBLocals during the summer of
2006. When I later attended a Greg MacPherson show at that same location, I noticed that Mi’Kmaqs were not among the audience, although several were employees at the show.

Cultural diversity is often discussed as a matter of skin color. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) frame race as an issue of greater complexities. “Race is a constituent of the individual psyche and of relationships among individuals; it is also an irreducible component of collective identities and social structures” (p. 138). There is something about race that matters but there is an inability to articulate the varying factors that contribute to how race or culture is perceived in any given context.

Scholars have turned to theories of "whiteness" to deconstruct the colonizing "othering" of previous "exotic" ethnographies. John Hartigan, Jr. (1997) argues that one shortcoming of the literature on whiteness is that most scholars have automatically zeroed on interracial settings:

Interracial urban settings provide the most frequent depictions of whites negotiating racial matters. In these situations, when whites and blacks from different regions and class backgrounds come to the city and clash, class and regional lines can blur stark racial divides, even to the point where the "social bottom" is no longer assuredly linked to blackness. Racially mixed urban neighborhoods range from volatile to benign, but usually the changeable and uncertain nature of urban terrains makes abstract notions of race tenuous (p. 501).

He argues that in order to fully understand race, we must get past the idea of race as socially constructed. Hartigan, Jr. (1999) instead calls for scholars to assess how people experience race as a daily reality instead of assuming that race, and whiteness specifically, is a singular monolith that can be understood and applied likewise to all situations. These "(unstable) local readings" of race lead Hartigan, Jr. to "suspect that people are provisional in their racial
assessments in a way that is missed, overlooked, or underestimated…this is not something that is easily captured in one single interview” (p. 15). He reaches this conclusion by analyzing three Detroit neighborhoods in which white citizens comprise a significant minority of the population. He finds differing conceptions of whiteness, dependent upon class.

Hartigan, Jr.’s call for a nuanced understanding of how people within any community perceive whiteness is useful in developing a frame to explain how many of my interviewees interpreted issues of race and culture within Cape Breton. At first glance, whiteness appears as a form of invisible privilege within the CBLocals scene. People rarely discussed the issue informally and when people raised the subject, the CBLocals scene was portrayed as a tolerant alternative to the racial insensitivity from the remainder of the Cape Breton community. Cultural identity was not constructed through whiteness, but rather through ethnicity as an alternative lens for expressing difference.

Andrew Nurse (2002) describes the "inclusion of Scottish ethnic heritages" in Atlantic Canada as "overt coding." Use of visible symbols such as the Tartan and the fiddle promote an image of "Scottishness" in Cape Breton. The "giant fiddle" on the wharf of the Sydney waterfront is an example of overt coding. Located in heart of the downtown area, the monument is an explicit statement of Scottish heritage and is distinct from attractions that express cultural identity in other parts of the country.

Nurse furthermore suggests: "Implicit codlings can be harder to detect. A regional identity, for example, that does not explicitly exclude non-white people may still do so because of the way in which this identity is publicly represented and structured" (p. 3). In this sense, CBLocals represents potential exclusion for non-whites in two facets: first, the area itself is
constructed in a Scottish, white, imaginary and the CBLocals scene as an alternative is constructed in an indie-rock imaginary that is predominately white in it construction.

Several interviewees argued from a position of marginalization although they looked the same as everyone around them (both in terms of skin color and social class). They discounted the idea that Cape Breton was merely Scottish or Celtic. Two users specifically reframed diversity as a composition of differing European backgrounds:

- (interviewee in early 20s): It doesn’t matter if you’re Irish, Scottish, Protestant or Catholic. My father’s Protestant, my mom’s Catholic. My mother comes from a Russian-Polish family, y’know, they were Russian and Polish, which don’t really get along. And then my father is Irish and English. I’m a mutt (laughs). But I’m a Canadian, I’m a Cape Bretoner…it’s a real shame because everyone thinks we’re all Scottish but we are, like I said, a culturally diverse people. And why they don’t play that up in tourist ads, I’ll never understand. I went to school at the Pier and people would say “racial tension.” That’s bullshit. Most of the people I went to school with were white and middle-class. People don’t hate you because you’re Irish, they hate you because you don’t play hockey (laughs).

- (interviewee in 30s): The last resource we have on this island is our culture and I think every culture in Cape Breton should be proud of themselves: not only the Scottish culture but the Italian culture, the Polish culture, you know, the people from the West Indies should all be proud of themselves. (We shouldn’t) all be painted with a plaid brush.
Both interviewees downplayed any suggestions of marginalization of those who did not fit the description of whiteness, or they at least saw these individuals as no more or less marginalized than anyone else who clashed with the Scottish cultural imaginary.

Rebellion against the construction of the Cape Breton Celtic imaginary was even more pronounced in discussion about music. Cape Breton is home to a distinct fiddle sound of "updriven bowing" and frequent "cuts" (MacGillvary, 1981, Pittaway, 1998, Hebert, 2002). Remarking on the construction of the giant fiddle, a CBC article stated "Cape Breton's style of Celtic fiddle music originated with Scottish immigrants about two centuries ago, and it is widely held that the tradition has been better preserved in Cape Breton than in Scotland" (2005).

CBLocals bands simply play amorphous rock music found anywhere in North America. At least, this is what I posited to my interviewees. Some agreed, but others took offense with the suggestion. Most pointed to lyrics as where one could see a distinct form of Cape Breton expression, rooted against any other type of rock music. Others conceded that they "couldn't describe it" but that they felt there was something distinct about CBLocals music.

By placing the CBLocals scene against the overt coding of Scottishness, members of the community downplay the implicit meanings of whiteness found in indie rock. Indie rock is portrayed as a white counter cultural imaginary to the white imaginary of Scottishness. Hence, race is more invisible in this scene than in other urban environments. CBLocals is rooted in this contemporary portrayal of “authentic” white music. It reflects a wider trend in indie rock across North America in attracting an almost entirely white audience. The website did not do anything to change this comprisal. However, I found it more striking that it did not impact perceptions of cultural diversity. The wider Western perception of rock music was of the white music contrasted with black dance and rap. Yet for CBLocals followers, it was the clear contrast to an
equally white but nevertheless different construction of Scottishness that they found too prevalent within the Cape Breton area.

**GENDER**

I find it funny (and sad) when folks who pride themselves on being "individuals" conform to such trendy, fashion oriented uniforms.

Wearing girl pants is pathetic. Period.

- Jeffolation, controversial CBLocals messageboard user.

(Posted on CBLocals board: Tue Mar 08, 2005 5:03 pm)

It is late night, June 2, 2006, or morning of June 3. Carmen Townsend & the Shakey Deals are playing for a crowd at the Upstairs, one of 28 shows Carmen will play in 2006. Perhaps since she is such a frequent attraction, the audience has become jaded to her presence as the chatter of the room overwhelms any attempt for her to play a soft number. She implores the crowd to be quiet for a few moments and receives no responses. Absentmindedly, I yell out from the front, “the lady asked for some quiet!” Carmen looks at me with a smile and asks, “who you callin’ a lady?” It seems apparent that being lady-like is not an element of rock and roll music.

On the surface, CBLocals represents underground culture and welcomes as many participants as possible. The following woman felt she was respected by her peers, men and women:

It’s varied, it’s welcoming…I honestly don’t know…any opportunity I have to perform, I kinda do it. Nobody puts me down or says that I can’t do it as well as anybody else. I don’t really get any negativity towards my involvement, moreso praise for doing it…I’m just another musician. I would hope so anyway…
Nevertheless, there are significantly fewer women than men within the scene. By my estimate, the gender divide at AA shows ranged from 4-1 in favor of men in the most extreme (the June 1 show at Sydney River Firehall) to, in one case, 3-2 in favor of women (July 30 show at the same venue). Bar shows closed this gender gap; the average ratio being somewhere below 3-2 in favor of men.

There was also a struggle over the subcultural capital attributed to feminine traits of both the performers and the audience. Jeffolation’s quote revealed his disgust toward the emo trend and, more specifically, the idea of men's fashion paralleling women's fashion in any way. Emo/screamo bands were popular among AA attendees yet they were constantly subject to scorn on the messageboards. Their popularity also did not translate into the bar scene as most people above the age of 18 that I either interviewed or informally spoke with held both the music and fashion of emo in low esteem.

Conversations about the lack of women participating in the scene coupled with masculine definitions of musical standards reveal the overall masculine quality of the scene. How socialization occurs at events reveals that the CBLocals scene typifies the marginalization that indie scenes exercise towards the social ritualization of dancing.

“Guys Are Way Better at Music Than Girls”

The ratio of men-to-women in CBLocals music was even more disparate than that of attendance. I witnessed only 14 women on stage during the entire two-and-a-half months of fieldwork. Of these 14, only five were local. The most typical makeup of bands in the AA scene was a two-guitar, one bass, one drum layout with no women filling any of those roles. For younger participants, the disparity was even greater. I saw only three local women perform at AA shows and none under the age of 18. There were three bands that featured women that
visited. Even promotion activity for local concerts was heavily skewed towards men. I only knew one woman active in promoting, Gillian Hillier. She assisted Joe Costello for a number of shows in 2006; otherwise I saw no women participating in this activity.

Most of the women I interviewed expressed confusion rather than concern with these numbers. Few of them cited any problems within the CBLocals community in welcoming women. One woman was not only unconcerned, but bristled at questioning the disparity:

Interviewee: Who cares!?…I don't see why people always have this idea that there has to be the exact same number of female-to-male musicians in every given genre. Or why if a girl is good at guitar, it's a surprise whereas a girl concert pianist wouldn't be surprising to anybody.

Bryce: You think it’s a genre thing?

Interviewee: No, I think it’s just stupid! Like: I don’t see why it’s an issue…I think probably about 50% of it is that questions like this are still being asked and discussed. It’s not necessary to talk about it. If you keep bringing up this supposed handicap, you will create this handicap…where it wasn't before.

The woman explicitly denied genre plays a role in low participation rates from women in the scene but her answer implied the opposite. Piano “hails” women's participation due to less controversy surrounding their involvement in that genre than in rock music. (I only witnessed one group using a piano in their performances over the summer, the female duo Rosemary & Thyme). She suggested that if people did not talk about what a big deal a woman playing guitar is, there would be more. If more people talked about what a big deal a woman playing piano is, there would be less.
Another interviewee agreed that while women were welcomed in the scene; too much emphasis was often placed on their difference rather than their individual ability. She found herself guilty of this as well and noted that rather than being simply admired, the few women frequently performing in the CBLocals scene tended to receive what she perceived as excessive admiration:

I find there are a lot less girls in bands…I'm against FEMCON [female content regulations] and all that stuff…[but] if there is a female in a band, I'm probably more interested in them. If there are two punk bands that were pretty much the same, I'm gonna watch the one that has a girl in it just because...I guess that's just because I'm a girl. And it is something slightly different. It's not to say that there aren't any girls in the scene because obviously there are...there are some girls who are like worshipped…they're pretty much, like, goddesses in the scene, everyone loves them.

She emphasized “worshipped,” suggesting that the current women in the CBLocals scene created a difficult image to which to live up. Whereas there was a wide range of men to laud, deplore or simply ignore, women were scare by comparison. Her sentiments were echoed by many interviewees. Carmen Townsend and Alicia Penney frequently were cited as favorite performers in the area.

The woman also cited FEMCON, a proposal to increase women's presence on the Canadian radio airwaves through policy-making. In March of 2006, Canada’s National Campus/Community Radio Association (NCRA) proposed that Canadian radio stations should adhere to playlists of which at least 35% of its music FemCon “meets two of the following
categories: music, artists, lyrics and production by women” (Willis, 2006). These regulations would mirror that of the CANCON policy towards Canadian artists that I discuss in Chapter 3.

Conversations on content regulations in this fashion are different in an American context (where deregulation is more often the subject of discussion). Yet this woman was the only individual who specifically mentioned FEMCON in her interview. No one else ever approached the discussion of women in music as an issue of policy. In this sense, the CBLocals scene held to the conservative American model of avoiding discussion of regulation or affirmative action as a means to address the societal issue of women and their place in popular music.

Another woman felt that there was a need to give certain leeway within the scene so as to encourage women's future participation. She cited the example of a visiting band, Sixty Stories, who insisted on having a bill in which each act featured at least one woman. She contrasted this to an example of a teenage four-piece group (Of All Things) with three teenage women playing one of their first shows in Cape Breton, only to be mocked by the nationally popular Protest the Hero band headlining. Of All Things, having only recently formed and having little original material, played covers of popular songs to fill out their set. Specifically, they played songs by Fallout Boy, a commercially successful American pop punk band:

Protest the Hero made fun of them. They didn’t see it was all girls, I don’t think, and they were just thinking “oh, you’re covering Fallout Boy, I’m going to make fun of you.” And it’s like, “well, they’re the only girls doing something in the scene that isn’t identified with the House of Rock.” These girls are younger, they haven't gotten the confidence yet…(whereas) if you caught Alicia Penney at age 16 …I remember awhile ago Sixty Stories came here, they made sure that every band in the show had a girl in it. Because at the AA
show, Yellow (with Alicia) played. Not saying that Alicia wasn't confident already, but that probably helped.

While not invoking the proposed radio policy of FEMCON, she nevertheless advocated affirmative action. She argued Yellow benefitted from a concentrated effort from a visiting band to include women in their show. As such, Penney gained an important support slot en route to developing an audience in the CBLocals scene.

Overall participation on the website skewed the same way as show participation. It was impossible to determine exactly how many members of the user base were women and how many were men. Yet when I would ask users about their favorite contributors to the site and messageboard, most of the names I heard were those of men. The majority of website admins were men and none of the messageboard moderators were women. A newer user provided somewhat of an outsider's perspective:

Interviewee: I get the feeling that there's more guys on the scene than girls. And I don't know why that is. I mean a lot of the times, the names (on the messageboard)...you don't know if it's female-male.
Bryce: But nonetheless, you feel like there's more guys?
Interviewee: Yeah and I don't know why that is. And maybe it's because it seems like there's more guys in bands than girls. Maybe it's just an assumption that the people who are playing music are more the ones who are also frequenting the sites and writing on the sites.

When using descriptors for music, most interviewees used gender-neutral terms or terms associated with masculine qualities. Masculine terms occasionally came with negative connotations. More than one participant from the 1990s scene expressed their happiness that
grunge music had usurped the “cock rock” of the 1980s in popularity. However, other people I interviewed used descriptive terms that suggested a lack of sufficient masculinity went with distasteful music, like this critic:

> You see these little twerps, pardon the expression. They form these bands and they think they're really punk. And they sound like Avril Lavigne— for boys. They have that setup, watered down skater punk thing happening. And it just sounds like sugar. It sounds like kool aid, it sounds like preservatives, it sounds superficial because it has nothing to do with this place. It has everything to do with Los Angeles or somewhere in southern California…they just sound like prepubescent little brats. With no hair on their chest. (emphasis added).

Another interviewee, trying to verbalize his dislike for emo, ultimately concluded:

"There’s no, like, ballsiness to it for me. There’s nothing gritty enough about it."

It is well-established by a variety of studies that the general scope of popular music is dominated by men. Some scholars have written about how the press excludes women's perspectives and emphasizes men in their canons of critical acclaim. Helen Davies (2001) notes critics of popular music in Britain separate serious pop music from “chart pop” music. Since the vast majority of these writers are men, music criticism in general has a male lens:

The type of music covered by the music press is constructed there as "serious" pop music, to differentiate it from chart pop which, presumably, is not serious...the vast majority of music journalists in Britain are male...and female journalists are often relegated to the least important parts of the paper. The music press assumes that all its readers are male as well, so that the situation is often one
of male journalists writing for male readers, a fact reflected in the mode of address of much music writing (pp. 301-2).

The “mode of address” shapes how those who identify themselves as music fans come to describe music. This situation is an extension of Western music criticism in general. Musicologist Susan McClary (2002) surveys music criticism and suggests that the very construction of tonality is coded masculine, with the development of sonata stressing a primary or a conveniently labeled “masculine” key that represents the self. The secondary or “feminine” key is explored by this self, hence the vast majority of Western music which adheres to this style is masculine by design. This hierarchization is conveyed through the title of her treatise, *Feminine Endings*. Critics used this term, often derisively in McClary’s view, to describe weak cadences.

The CBLocals culture lacked professional music criticism. The website did feature the occasional show review, usually by show promoter Joe Costello. As such, most of the writing about the local music to which the fans were exposed came from one man. Since the vast majority of these participants were also men, the “mode of address” both locally and internationally for writing about music was very much male. Few were willing to openly suggest that the overwhelming prevalence of men was a matter of “survival of the fittest.” One person did, citing Penney's work in Tom Fun and Carmen Townsend as the only exceptions: "Guys are way better at music than girls. There's a girl in Tom Fun who's stellar. She's one of the best rhythm guitar players I've ever seen. Likewise for Carmen Townsend. I couldn't name another one."
Another more subtly suggested that the effort was not there on the women's part even though they were just as capable. He tried to assess why women were not more involved and his response eventually led to a discussion about the role that effort played in the equation:

You need to really get interested in the music, you need to *really* want to play guitar...most people will try to play it and they'll just stop playing it because it hurts their fingers and they can't do it. Now with me, it was, like "I need to keep doing this until my fingers DON'T hurt anymore and I can move them fast enough"...the only way you're going to do that is if you really mentally want to do it.

These responses evoke stereotypes of rock music as a world of technical proficiency even though many musicians (The Ramones spring to mind) have influenced rock music with a minimum skill set. The musician's response implied, though did not state explicitly, that women comprised a minority of participants in the scene because they were not trying hard enough.

One of my findings in the CBLocals scene contradicted typical indie rock scenes—how musical labor was distributed to women. Mary Ann Clawson (1999) surveyed a number of rock musicians about the issue of why women more often play bass than guitar or drums in rock bands. Her findings suggest a reconstruction of gendered divisions of labor in which women only advance in positions to which men no longer aspire. “Because it combines lower entry-level skill requirements with greater demand, the bass, in their view, offered the most opportunities for band participation” (p. 199). Women are not heavily active in CBLocals bands but curiously, those that are do *not* play bass. I only saw one woman perform who was not the band’s vocalist.
The low visibility of women on the CBLocals website was the strongest indication of how the music scene typified women's involvement in indie rock. The subject was rarely raised on the website or forum itself. At no point during my fieldwork was it discussed. Even the issue of FEMCON did not attract any attention on the CBLocals board, although it would be raised on the HalifaxLocals forum in 2007.

The newcomer's comments typified how those I interviewed interpreted the messageboard. No one actually knew that there were more men than women on the board but everyone assumed that this was the case. This was very much in keeping with the spirit that the messageboard and website were reflective of the scene as a whole, rather than a separate universe.

**Mode of Masculinity and Femininity: “Popular Boy,” “Popular Girl”**

On August 1, 2006, Carmen Townsend and the Shakey Deals were scheduled to play Daniel’s as part of “House of Rock” Tuesdays. As part of the HOR collective, the band was familiar enough to the patrons of Daniel’s to not be particularly offensive—even to those who preferred the chart-topping dance music that played in between sets. However, on this night, Carmen could not make it and Airport stepped in as her replacement.

Although bassist Donnie Calabrese was a Tom Fun Orchestra member and drummer Thomas Allen was in Carmen’s band, frontman and songwriter Aaron Corbett was separate from HOR. Airport and their opening act, The Roots and Rhythm Remain, were virgin territory to most of the audience. “We should move to those stools over there,” one patron told her friends as they moved from the corner near the door to the center of the room. “Then it looks like we’re giving these guys (R&RR) an audience.” “I don’t have any friends in this town anymore,” went...
one of the tunes, a perhaps appropriate sentiment as few people in the room—numbering somewhere between 40-50 people—appeared to give the band much of their attention.

Airport appeared as a three-piece on this evening and their mere presence on the stage produced a visible reaction of chagrin among the small gathering of women on the dance floor. Most of the times that I went to Daniel’s, the only time the regular clientele appeared excited was when the summer hit “Crazy Bitch” by Buckcherry was played in between sets. While everyone I knew from the scene grimaced because they held the song in low esteem musically, a group of women (in larger numbers as the summer went along) would hit the dance floor to enjoy the song. These same women were not as enthusiastic about Airport’s mostly acoustic material about quirky topics like credit card callers and “what would you do for $100?”

In only the second song of the Airport set, Aaron Corbett wailed out “I know what the people want!,” which appeared to be the epitome of irony in this “bar star” crowd. This line comes from “A-Minor,” a song which anthropomorphizes the musical chord as an everyman to which everyone can relate. However, this seemingly accessible upbeat guitar-driven pop still met with indifference from the Daniel’s audience. The small dance floor before the stage remained empty even as Airport energetically ran through a second set. A few patrons politely smiled and tried to entertain the singer as he pointed the query directly at them, but their interest was passing.

As it grew closer to closing time, the bar filled up more-and-more with young twenty-something white men, ranging from 5’10 to 6’4, wearing backwards baseball caps—the “jock look” as my CBLocals friends would call it. The crowd peaked at around 150 people with maybe only 10-20 paying attention to the band. Aaron announced the band’s last song and few cared as the generic 4/4 bass-driven beat began. Suddenly, Aaron sang a lyric familiar to
everyone in the audience: “Go shorty, it’s your birthday, we’re gonna party like it’s your birthday…”

The citation of a pop standard (“In Da Club” by 50 Cent), especially one heard frequently in popular bars like Daniel’s, Capri and Smooth Herman’s was enough to get everyone’s attention. Airport’s rousing finale, “The Pop Song,” always meets with a great reception due to no small part to the comic absurdity of a short, stocky man singing pop lyrics— even those belonging to long, lanky women in pop music. The song always continues in the same insistent beat, suggesting either intentionally or unintentionally that pop song lyrics are basically interchangeable with any riff written in 4/4 time. On this night, however, “The Pop Song” took on a new significance.

Corbett frantically abandoned his guitar and began to move about, singing lyrics to such pop hits as “My Humps” and “Remix to Ignition.” The same cadre of women that had viewed Airport indifferently earlier now rooted them on. The song finished with a flourish of applause and for a few moments, Airport appeared to have conquered Sydney. On my way out of the bar, I observed one of the twenty-something women who had, only hours ago, observed Airport’s arrival to the stage with disdain. “That guy’s wicked, isn’t he?,” she remarked to her boyfriend as Aaron Corbett walked off the stage to a smattering of one-night admirers. For the CBLocals crowd, the “Pop Song” was a hilarious irony. No one was quite sure if the mainstream crowd here at Daniel’s saw it that way but at least for five minutes, everyone enjoyed the same music.

The CBLocals scene in 2006 was infused with people from the AA scene that embraced the open displays of femininity within the emo genre. It also was infused with vocal critics of that trend as well as members of the bar scene who eschewed emphasis on fashion or the body in favor of the more “intellectual” indie rock approach. Here we find that the CBLocals scene is
typical of what Bannister (2006) describes as the “white masculinity” of other indie rock scenes in North America.

In its infancy, rock and roll was both celebrated and derided for its celebration of the body. Conversely, pop music—specifically popular dance music—is outwardly physically emotive. Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs (1992) argue that the popularity of the Beatles was revolutionary in that it provided license for teenage (and pre-teenage) girls to express suppressed sexual feelings that society frowned upon them having. This expression was very vocal—the throngs of screaming and yelling that greeted sex symbols like the Beatles and Elvis were unprecedented. This did not improve their cache with cultural critics who felt that the feminine displays of sexuality detracted from the music.

Bannister (2006) argues that proponents of "indie masculinities" base rock music to the “serious” and deride any sense of outward emotion. To put one’s heart on his (note his) sleeve is to distract from his art. Bannister argues that the most successful indie rock artist, most often a man, is simultaneously dedicated to his craft yet somehow seems completely detached in appearance:

The paradoxical impassivity of the ‘straight man’ is a key strategy for indie masculinities, because it distances performers from the problematics of sexuality and allows them to distance themselves from a fixed meaning. One can’t tell whether the performer ‘means’ what he does or says (and therefore can’t condemn him). By not offering the audience any kind of emotional cue or simple identification, he can thus hold himself apart, and perhaps imply a rational detachment or intellectual superiority from the spectacle (p. 49).
Ehrenreich et. al demonstrate that rock and roll’s infancy was portrayed as very much the opposite of this stoic presentation. In fact, Chuck Berry, the Beatles and Elvis among others were noted for both being very emotive but especially for attracting emotive audiences. The hypersexuality of rock music drew the ire of conservative critics and rock has been celebrated for its liberation from such rigid norms. Criticism of popular dance music among indie circles, however, is charged with “indie masculine” rhetoric that is actually indicative of Frith’s (1981) description of the onset of “artistic” rock. Serious artists aspire to make their music obscure; lack of expressiveness from the audience and the performers is the norm.

However, this is not to say that there were not bands from within the CBLocals culture that were not renowned for their danceability. In fact, Slowcoaster and Tom Fun Orchestra reached large audiences within Cape Breton for that very reason. Still, dance music was often mentioned alongside heteronormative courtship. The crowd that went to bars “just to pick up” was viewed as having a negative impact on the scene. The fact that interactions were viewed and described as man-woman in and of itself reveals a strong sense of heteronormativity that pervaded the scene (discussed later in this chapter). The “bar scene” that many participants held in contempt was one in which men and women competed for each other’s attention to the detriment of the quality of music.

One criticism frequently lobbed at the popular bars was that those that went “just to pick up” spent more time evaluating each other physically than engaging the music. Angela McRobbie (1984) theorizes dance through Laura Mulvey’s concept of the cinematic gaze (1975). Mulvey argues that women have been forced to watch movies as though they are doing so through the eyes of men. This is because the structure of most cinematic shots are positioned to correspond with male leads, hence a male “mode of looking.” McRobbie argues that popular
music, movies and television present dance in an analogous fashion: it is looked but from a heterosexual man's perspective and dancing women are subject to the “gaze.”

Cover bands, which reproduce classic commercial hits and sometimes contemporary ones as well, are held in low regard by most within the CBLocals community. In fact, most musicians I have spoken with in North America feel that being in a cover band is “not that hard” and a demeaning task to anyone that considers themselves an “artist” Still, one musician that had spent time in both cover and original bands identified dancing, and gaze, as a reason why cover bands are able to draw crowds:

…what you will see every single time is that girls will grab other girls in the audience by the hand and drag them bodily to the dance floor. And they will dance and frolic and giggle. And the guys will follow shortly because that is what they are after. The formula to being in a cover band is ‘play danceable poppy music which will attract women who in turn will attract men and you will have a packed house. Very simple.

This corresponded to the feedback that bar patrons had of Daniel’s and Herman’s. It was particularly problematic when bands like Slowcoaster, whose funk-oriented sound made them infinitely danceable, played at Herman’s or Daniel’s. One woman was a CBLocals fan of Slowcoaster who found it difficult to cope with the Herman’s or Daniel’s atmosphere, which she felt put her on display.

I’ve been to Herman’s on a regular night (with cover bands or no bands playing) and it’s been not fun. For me, anyways. And I can have fun, I’m not like “Ugghhhhh, I don’t like that rotten dance music!” You know what I mean? ‘Cause I’ll totally have fun to it. But I mean it’s wayyy funner when
Slowcoaster’s playing, just when everyone I know is there…even if (they were) there and it’s just a regular night, it’d be way funner than just…’cause you’re just so awkward, I feel like every single person who normally goes to Herman’s is looking at you and they’re judging you on a scale of 1-10. Leave me alone!

She disliked the fact that Herman’s attendees, especially the men, placed more attention on the gaze than on the music. She, and other CBLocals devotees, felt that this was the case more often than not when popular dance music was played. Airport’s accessible but decidedly undanceable acoustic tunes did not create any spectacle of dancing until “The Pop Song” finale. They left the dance floor empty, even while CBLocals followers attentively bobbed their heads and sang along to songs they knew.

One scene veteran was aggravated by the social strata he observed at Daniel’s. He witnessed the band in venues such as the Maple Leaf, where the majority of the audience was usually respectful if not always completely attentive towards CBLocals acts. It bothered him that the Daniel’s audience was not as receptive: "It really annoyed me that 'popular boy' went up to the bar and said something. And 'popular girl,' who overheard him, had to agree— because he was 'popular boy'— about how the show sucked."

These comments suggest that many CBLocals users welcome the physical environment of shows as an escape from the pressures of heterosexual bonding rituals. This is where indie rock scenes appear counterintuitive. Cognitive psychologists have cited music as a social lubricant, noting that it aids courtship and reduces social anxiety (Huron, 2001, Fukui, 2001). Music scenes are communities and communities thrive on the establishment of interpersonal relationships.
Courtship rituals were not as visible at CBLocals friendly venues like Bunker's, the Maple Leaf and the Upstairs. It became visibly obvious if you spent enough time in conversation with people to find out who was dating whom. However, as someone who had spent some time away from the scene, I was surprised at the invisibility of courtship within the scene. This was replicated at AA shows. It was not visibly evident who was dating whom from watching teenagers at the shows, at least from afar.

However, I did notice that the AA scene seemed more fashion-conscious. While the courtship was not visible, I was more easily able to identify this scene as one where the participants appeared to put care into the visual impressions they made on their peers. The bar scene did not actively have a “look,” the AA shows did. The crowds for most AA shows, especially those with the popular Richmond Hill and Drowning Shakespeare, featured crowds of teenagers with tight fitting jeans and thick combovers (the ―emo-ver‖) and women favored blouses and dress pants; some more fashionable jeans. It was a far cry from the CBLocals bar crowd of plain button-up or flannel shirts with jeans that were neither particularly tight or loose-fitting. A 21-year-old musician and fan was one of the few to point out what I was already thinking, which is that some level of uniformity in look in AA scenes is quite common and repeats itself over generations: “You know what, people complain ‘aw people are all emo now?’…I used to have an undercut, dreadlocks, every hairstyle imaginable…who cares?”

I find it interesting that the biggest reason that people complained was because the “emo” look was deemed feminine. “Girls’ pants” was one of the most immediately identified items with the emo trend. I found that while members of the bar scene held popular music in contempt for putting the spectacle of dance ahead of the music, AA critics derided fashion as being put ahead of the music, as this musician did:
It’s not about the music, it’s more about going there, dressing up with your dyed-black hair combover and your glasses and your tight pants and standing around and *looking* like you’re this emo music scene…emo is fashion. It seems to be more of a fashion thing than a music thing…it’s easier to tell people what emo *looks* like than what it *sounds* like.

Few Richmond Hill and Drowning Shakespeare fans were vocal online. Promoter Joe Costello argued on the CBLocals messageboard that the majority of AA attendees did not frequent CBLocals. My attempts to recruit AA interviewees reflected this as few felt that they knew or cared enough about the “CBLocals scene” to offer proper commentary. The majority of teenagers wearing tight pants and sporting “emo” haircuts were removed from the indie sensibility of the CBLocals scene as defined by the group of participants that convened on the Internet. They were the AA version of the Herman’s dance crowd: more concerned with appearances and derided for doing so.

Both the critics of the Herman’s dance crowd and those scoffing at the emo trend aspired to a level of the serious, a rejection of the spectacle. One Roots & Rhythm Remain fan punctuated his disdain for the Daniel’s crowd by declaring that they were “going over the head” of the audience. I noted the attire of the quartet: assorted t-shirts, jeans and corduroy pants. The drummer wore a Sadies shirt, a hip reference to the Canadian “alt-country” band that were considered an underground success. The members of the band’s set was 20-25 minutes and the musicians moved very little while playing. In short, there little spectacle to R&RR.

This was typical of the average bar show outside of Herman's and Daniel's. Most of the people that attended these shows stuck to a variety of "plain" ensembles, ranging from t-shirts and jeans to flannel shirts with corduroy pants. Occasionally, a band logo would appear on a
An interesting contrast to this within the scene was the Downfall, who added a bit of flair to their performances with sunglasses, headbands and a flashing red siren light behind their drummer. This drew little positive or negative reaction from most of the people I spoke with although one person confessed his opinion of the drummer: "Justin is so fuckin' cool, man!"

However, band members typically did not dress to stand out from the audience.

Nevertheless, the look of the band still serves a hegemonic function: that of the "non-look" look. Bannister (2006) argues that one of the ways that hegemonic masculinities are reinscribed in music scenes is through "mutually opposing high and low cultures." (p. 25). In this regard, the CBLocals bar culture "non look" was presented as the counter to the decidedly overly image-obsessed Herman's and Daniel's crowd. Two women admitted as much in one of their interviews. They described an Ultimate Frisbee game, after which a large group of players attended Bunkers to watch Tom Fun. One of their fellow friends, not a normal show attendee, "probably got some stares," they conceded, due to her choice of makeup and a blouse— a decided "look," rather than a "non-look look." The argument that this woman "stood out," particularly as not belonging, reinscribes masculinity to the scene through the rejection of an overly feminized presentation.

One male musician described the paradox that he saw women facing as participants in any music scene, not only CBLocals. While the hegemonic "non look" presentation supposedly espoused simple proficiency over a consciously constructed presentation (that would be decidedly feminine), women were nevertheless still observed for their looks first before their talents:

I think you can be the best musician in the world if you can convince yourself that you are... guys, when they're onstage with a guitar in their hands, they're just
oozing with confidence…if you see a hot girl playing on stage, the first thing you notice is a hot girl playing on stage…(whereas) I think the cuteness of a guy stems from the music the play…it's just the way guys are-- Sex first, "finance" later. And by "finance," I mean everything.

Essentially, the interviewee suggests that females' appearances are always noticed before their competence, whereas he feels that men are judged in the opposite way. This places women in the scene in a bind. Participating in the resinscribed masculine sensibility of indie rock rejects presenting one self to be as the subject of the gaze, yet men judge women first by the standards of the gaze.

Of course, this observation paints both men and women within the scene in very broad strokes. Nevertheless, in this generalization, the hegemonic function is established. The eschewing of fashion within the CBLocals scene conforms to the reinscription of masculine standards found in other indie rock scenes across the world. Fashion, or femininity, is summarily rejected.

In the AA scene, Drowning Shakespeare, Richmond Hill and Athymia were able to attract more spectators and, accordingly, were able to draw a significant number of women to the front of the performing area (in lieu of an actual stage). Women did not participate frequently in the AA scene but a number of men in bands were criticized on the messageboard for being trendy and wearing women’s fashion to maintain these trends. The comments about emo having a look rather than a sound are especially telling. The “feminine” fashion overrides the “masculine” standards of enjoying and evaluating the music. For the source of these comments, one should not build a music scene based on fashion as this is the “wrong” criterion.
Women already appear to comprise the minority of the CBLocals audience but the scant number of women visibly playing music is striking. We traditionally observe “relegation” in indie rock for women to the “easier” or less-valued role of bass player or the more “feminine” role of piano player. In CBLocals, the majority of women involved are in fact singer/songwriters that play guitar. There just happens to be very few of them.

Other than the lack of “relegation” in terms of who plays what, the CBLocals scene is otherwise typical of the indie masculine sensibility. Displays of fashion are derided both in the terms of the bar crowds that gather oblivious to most of the bands and in terms of the AA crowds that dress in accordance to the emo style. Music was not meant for the gaze, but rather for artistic analysis and unfortunately, this spotlight away from the gaze so rarely shone on women.

REGION AND CLASS

This whole thread reminds me why Cape Breton is where dreams go to die.

- Lachie MacDonald, Halifax resident originally from Cape Breton, commenting on the discussion of Dylan's banning and the comparisons to the HalifaxLocals messageboard

(Posted on CBLocals board: Tue Mar 08, 2005 5:03 pm, repeated in several threads thereafter)

The only people who have ever given me any grief for living in cape breton were from halifax or had spent a lot of time in halifax. west of new brunswick, people either don't know where it is, or immediately say, "OH, it's supposed to be so BEAUTIFUL there! do you play the FIDDLE?"

- Jackson E. MacIntosh, esq, expatriate Cape Bretoner in Montreal

(Posted on CBLocals board: Wed Feb 14, 2007 8:46 pm)
Indie rock is not only noted for being primarily geared to white men but it also possesses a certain middle-class and lower middle-class sensibility (Hibbett, 2005, Hesmondhalgh, 1999). Frith & Horne (1987) argue that British punk music and indie rock draw much of their influence from the movement from art students within the UK. As art school is not exactly an endeavor just anyone can afford, it is not surprising that it fails to attract a significant amount of the lower class economically. Art school students also possess a cosmopolitan sensibility, a worldliness and sophistication.

This sophistication works in stark contrast to what Paul Wills (1981) describes in *Learning to Labor* as the "strangled muted celebration of masculinity in labour power" in British factories and workshops (p. 174). In his analysis of young working-class men, Willis concluded that the subjects of his analysis exercise their agency by rejecting any sense of school's authority. This "relegates" them to working class jobs, which they celebrate as an assertion of their masculinity—as industrial labour jobs represent a counter to the feminine connotations of intellectual work. Willis describes this as an "anti-mentalism."

Frith & Horne and Willis wrote about a 1970s Britain that stands in stark contrast to the Britain of today, as Stanley Aronowitz notes in the Foreword to *Learning to Labor in New Times* (2004). Aronowitz notes that "the factory jobs that were still available in the early 1970s, when Willis engaged the lads, are now gone…from many major industrial cities in Britain, continental Western Europe, and the United States" (p. x). Yet he argues that there is still a reproduction of working-class oppositional culture to schooling and to the deindustrialization of labor.

In accordance with this argument, I argue that the CBLocals scene offers us an example of the class dissonance felt by Cape Bretoners in light of a deindustrialization that has greatly affected their economy. As cited in Chapter 1, the top three industries in Cape Breton prior to
the 1990s were coal, steel and local fisheries. All three industries collapsed. In 1995, Cape Breton possessed the highest population percentage with less than a high school education (Lee, p. 57). The deindustrialization of the area produced great economic pains and also affected the working-class identity propagated within the area.

Their closest point of comparison for a music scene and an economy is Halifax, which possesses a stronger educational industries footing. The Halifax area is closer to the art school environment that bred punk; with Nova Scotia School of Art and Design (NSCAD) students permeating the scene in addition to eight other postsecondary institutions. Industrial Cape Breton only hosts Cape Breton University and one campus of the Nova Scotia Community College. My interview subjects did not discuss issues of class as a matter of race, gender or sexual orientation. Many, however, did frame issues of class through the lens of discussion over differences between the CBLocals scene and the HalifaxLocals scene.

Cape Breton itself is comparatively lower class to the rest of Nova Scotia and Canada, both in terms of economics and cosmopolitan makeup. In 2006, the most popular “indie rock” bands from Canada were Broken Social Scene and the Arcade Fire, based in Toronto and Montreal respectively. Both cities are decidedly metropolitan, with multiple races and cultures, and economically sound compared to their Atlantic counterparts.

Most of those I interviewed identified positively with being a Cape Bretoner. The reactions of my interviewees ranged from the very few who had negative connotations with being a Cape Bretoner to those who were indifferent to regional pride. (“I didn't do anything, I just got born!,” said one woman with a laugh). These quotes represent the majority of the interviewees, proudly identifying with their home region and generally associating Cape Breton with laid-back people, beautiful scenery and camaraderie:
- You can walk down the street and say hi to a million people and they don’t look
  at you like you’re some freak…laid back, easy going, *like to have a good time*:
  shows, music, dance, parties…

- You’re always so close to the water. As soon as it’s warm enough to go to the
  water, we’re there. We’ve already had three bonfires at the beach and it’s just the
  beginning of June.

- The stereotypical Cape Bretoner to the rest of the country is similar to that of the
  stereotypical Native… unemployed, lazy. Those who don’t know us. Those who
  *do* just realize that we like to party and have a good time…we work hard and play
  hard.

Despite these proclamations, many interviewees acknowledged inferiority complexes
living in Cape Breton. Everyone that identified positively with Cape Breton also expressed
frustration with the area’s atypical qualities for an indie rock scene. Their frustrations with the
island’s class politics were most visibly noticed in discussions about the capital of Nova Scotia,
Halifax. A number of interviews and discussions on the board reflect that regionalism is the lens
by which people within the CBLocals scene view class negatively. Yet they are distinctly aware
of class cultures within the area, from this vantage point they view the scene positively.
Discussions of class reflect that *both* localism and glocalism matter in the CBLocals scene and
that the scene possesses both typical *and* atypical qualities of indie rock scenes. It is typical in
that the CBLocals participants view themselves as more cosmopolitan and middle-class in
comparison to their surroundings, but atypical in that they are decidedly lower-class in
comparison to their Halifax counterparts.
“If It Means Working in Retail, I Don’t Care!”

In my life, I have encountered a number of people that subscribed to the stereotype of the "lazy Cape Bretoner." Amongst friends, it has not been uncommon for a large group of us to mock the perceived accents and dialects of the area while portraying the typical "uneducated Cape Bretoner." Whenever an "outsider" dares attempt this humor, it is usually greeted with derision. I have come to find this is not unusual as most social groups prefer to keep humor about their characteristics insular.

I have also come to understand that Cape Breton is considered to be very rural— Sydney is the highest populated area and its 20,000+ pales in comparison to most North American urban centers. In the Western world, there is an ongoing perception of difference between rural and urban residents. Urban environments are often portrayed as housing liberal values, as do music communities, especially indie rock. I have never personally found the people with whom I interacted outside of Cape Breton to necessarily be more or less liberal, educated or "enlightened" than within the area. Still, among myself and my friends in the music scene, the belief persisted that we would probably not feel as much like outsiders in other parts of the country or the world.

For that reason, many people I observed felt that Cape Breton was not a place to make a life, regardless of whether or not you grew up there. This attitude was reflected in the responses from many users who either left or planned to leave Cape Breton. Their reasoning ranged from “I would like to stay but I have to leave Cape Breton to live my life” to “only those without initiative would ever stay,” as this interviewee implied:

There's an expression : "I'm right set in me ways" and Cape Breton is indeed stuck in its ways, for the most part. So yeah, it's a place that has limited potential
for self-improvement, self-enrichment…(some Cape Bretoners) say "the
government oughta do something about that," it's entitlement. A large part of the
Cape Breton economy is the dole, it's pogey, it's welfare.

This perspective touches on issues that I discuss in Chapter 3 regarding a negative
perspective on government intervention on Cape Breton affairs. It is economically middle-class
conservative, socially liberal logic: Cape Breton is not progressive because few people are
developing opportunities to enrich oneself financially or culturally. Specifically, people are too
reliant on government to resolve these problems rather than initiating solutions.

In the 2000s, Halifax still attracted CBLocals participants for school. Many of the people
that frequented shows and social outings, like RJ Good, Christian Young and Megan
MacDonald, had scheduled postsecondary treks to Halifax. However, Alberta's booming
economy became the new primary source of outmigration. My few teenage interviewees already
resigned that Cape Breton would not be where they would make their home. One of them
specifically mentioned Alberta as a future destination:

There’s no work here whatsoever. (Most) of my family live out in
Edmonton….plus if you plan on having a music career, you don’t stay in Sydney.
You just don’t do it…I want to come back here and be the main act that someone
is going to pay to see.

Another teenager empathized, stating that they would only stay if "there was a lot of
musical opportunities." As far as he was concerned, only pride kept the outmigration of youth
from being total: "regional patriotism in Cape Breton is a good thing… it’s the only thing that’s
keeping this place from becoming an old folks’ home."
The new phenomenon was Cape Bretoners travelling out west to Alberta (especially Fort McMurray) to partake of the booming oil community. Into my 20s, I observed many significant figures that I knew from the formation days of CBLocals settling in Halifax, including Sean MacGillvary, Mark Black, Mike Slaven, Alfred Remo and Allison Mackie. This tradition of uprooting combined with Halifax’s geographical proximity (close enough to visit frequently, far enough away to not be home) made it the common comparison point for Sydney. Prior to municipal amalgamations, Halifax, Sydney and Dartmouth were the only recognized cities in Nova Scotia. They are still considered as such unofficially. Halifax is the most prosperous of these areas with a much higher employment rate and multiple universities.

Aaron Corbett wrote his own Cape Breton parable (by his admission, somewhat by accident) in the late 1990s comedy sketch compilation, “All Title, No Practice II.” In his short play, someone is driving home to North Sydney from work. He picks up a variety of hitchhikers, all of whom are in a hypnotic trance. Despite his insistence that he is only returning home from work, they continue their efforts to persuade him to continue on to Halifax. They eventually hijack his car as they are on a mission to go to Halifax “where the streets are paved with gold.” The sketch ends with the driver becoming an entranced hitchhiker himself: he is off to Halifax to get his car back.

The metaphor stuck with a number of CBLocals users that had either left Cape Breton or planned to leave but there were exceptions. For example, some of the people I observed who had left Cape Breton either temporarily or permanently attributed it to a geographically non-specific attitude that it is regressive for anyone to stay in their hometown for their entire life. One person cited his frustration with his experience at Cape Breton University, feeling like he "wasn't growing up" being surrounded by people he already knew. He eventually sought refuge
in Halifax for a short period of time to meet new people. A woman in her 20s was more explicit: “I just find it weird when people live in their hometown.” Yet another musician noted that while the shift had gone from Halifax to Alberta, the emphasis on moving out remained:

I guess right now it would be “go out west.” Growing up, it was: "go to Halifax!"…I was being raised to believe that you can’t do anything here. Once you graduate, you have to make plans to get off the island…right now it’s the “out west” boom and people are “well, I don’t know what I want to do with my life so I’ll go out west: they’ll tell me what to do…I’ll go where the money is.

Those who stay in Cape Breton wrestle with negative perceptions. I interviewed one musician who found it particularly frustrating when people moved away to pursue their goals, but did not understand the goals of those that wanted to remain. This person had prioritized ambition to remain at home over professional goals:

Interviewee: It's hard…to make a living here without living with your parents and ruining their retirement…we do whatever it takes including not going to shows, not going to bars and not going out to eat so we can stay. Because you don’t need money to be happy here. You need money to be happy in Halifax, I think. If you have that perfect route of graduating high school, going to university, getting your professional degree after that and then doing what you want to do? Sure, go do it!…the only thing that I knew for sure since I was very little was that Cape Breton is home and that's where I'm staying. If that means working a retail job or something like that, I don't care!

Bryce: Do people look down on that?

Interviewee: Yes! Absolutely.
Bryce: Friends of yours?

Interviewee: Yes! Absolutely. “Is that what you’re going to do with the rest of your life?” Who cares about what I’m doing with the rest of my life? I’m (young) and I’m really happy right now. I’m having a really good time and nothing stresses me out.

This person was not alone. A sympathizer underscored the point about economic differences between life in Sydney and in Halifax: “You're gonna buy a house (in Sydney) that's actually nice for $65,000. If you go to Halifax…you're going to have to go $120,000 to find anything that's livable...I would never live in Halifax.” Both interviewees also deemed experiences living in or visiting Halifax unpleasant.

Both, working service jobs, also rejected the rhetoric of "moving up" beyond the rural area of Sydney. One of the interviewees specifically resisted what they perceived to be enforced schooling—essentially reinscribing the British working class sensibility described by Willis. I found it particularly telling that coal mining, steel working and fishing all ran in this interviewee's family and that they discussed the subject at greater length than any of my other interviewees.

These interviewees did not directly articulate their opinions through the language of class, but it was indirectly implied. People looked down upon them for placing regional preference over professional development. The cosmopolitan, worldly thing to do, their critics argued, was to move to a bigger city to obtain a better paying job. However, these people expressed dissatisfaction with living in Halifax and had no interest in pursuing a higher cost of living.
“The Rest of the Civilized World vs. Cape Breton”

One of the most heated debates in the summer of 2006 within the CBLocals scene was whether or not poorhaus, identified as Sean MacGillvary, was too heavy-handed in banning people for usage of homophobic language. However, a shadow discussion that grew in significance when I analyzed many of my interviews was the differences between Halifax and Cape Breton. Sean MacGillvary is from Cape Breton but lives in Halifax. This was not lost on some of his critics, who felt that Sean was selective in applying his messageboard standards towards Cape Bretoners.

One of Sean’s most vocal backers was thedeadwalk, identified as a Halifax musician living in Cape Breton. He felt that excessive moderation on HalifaxLocals was unneeded because everyone already knew how to conduct themselves. He spoke ill of Cape Breton on the messageboard:

no one on this island seems to want to do anything that could even be deemed remotely progressive and that is why this island will always be a gigantic shithole. it's still really pretty to look at. you can all slam me for being a "kjzhstdkjhasdf" or a "faget" but really, it's all you low iq'd small minded individuals who hold this place back.

(Posted on CBLocals board: Thu Jun 22, 2006 11:59 pm)

thedeadwalk received resistance from some of the users he intended to displease, several who called into question his judgment given that he had lived in the area for a short period of time. deadwalk also grated against users who were not considered targets of his original address. He received angry responses from JamesFW and ap (identified as musicians James F.W.)
Thompson and Alicia Penney). In an early 2007 thread, he got into a messageboard argument with mrk bd, although the two reconciled.

One of mrk bd's criticisms of deadwalk's negativity was echoed in the comments of my interviewees. They lamented the lack of progress in Sydney yet they also felt that the Halifax scene was not a model scene. They also criticized the lack of personability they felt from "mainlanders":

- Halifax had a very impersonal aura, probably just because I didn't know anybody but the city was so much bigger compared to Sydney. A lot less friendly.
- They have some of the very similar problems to us: lack of venues. They're losing their venues actually a lot faster than we are. All of their best venues are pretty much gone except for Stage Nine, Pavillion...I think (it) doesn't have the togetherness that Cape Breton has. One joke that somebody about a year ago told me was "what's the difference between yogurt and Halifax?" The answer was "yogurt has a culture."
- I don’t even like visiting Halifax…it’s all the pretentious indie-snob bullshit you get down here but times 50…all the young people there are pretentious. I’m painting everybody with a broad stroke obviously (laughs)...but I just like a more laid-back atmosphere.
- Last year, me and my friend were going to see SNFU in Halifax and he posted on the board “Hey does anybody know when these tickets go on sale and how much?” And the only reply he got was “if you’re paying a dollar, it’s too much.”
(No one going) responded. And when they do respond, it’s minute and snippy and I find there’s very little help.

Others explicitly resented what they felt was Halifax users’ upper-class aura, in musical and social terms. Sean MacGillvarry rejected any ideas of classism between Halifax and Cape Breton. He instead argued the use of homophobic language was a greater representation of how Cape Breton was “behind the times” and needed to change in many facets.

For the record, this was never about Halifax vs. Cape Breton. It's more like the rest of the fucking civilized world vs. Cape Breton. I'm not making this shit up; the rest of the Western world seriously thinks it's ignorant to call things "gay", Cape Breton just missed the boat, just like it was late for the "don't say n*gger" train by about 20 years. Hell, New Waterford is still waiting at the station for that one. Get with the times, people.

(poorhaus, posted on cblocals board: Sun Jun 25, 2006 11:52 pm)

This specific opinion borders on naiveté as the use of words such as “gay” and “nigger” are certainly controversial and hot-button issues across North America and the world. Even some of Sean’s allies, such as D-A-R-R-Y-L and ainsley believed that Sean applied the rules to the Cape Breton messageboard far too rigorously in comparison to Halifax’s messageboard. Sean’s hypersensitivity towards Cape Breton was emblematic of a greater class divide between Halifax and Cape Breton. Many of Sean's supporters still disliked what they perceived as different standards for HalifaxLocals messageboard, finding it representative of taking Halifax too seriously as the socially hip, indie-rock community where homophobia and racism did not happen.
One musician offered a particularly scathing critique of what he felt was the Halifax upper-class aura. In his interview, he suggested the moderation was symptomatic of a greater tendency within the Halifax scene to loudly advertise a politically correct and cultured sensibility. He detested what he felt was pretense and specifically cited the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design (NASCAD) as one source of his dislike.

A lot of (Halifax scenesters) are NASCAD pieces of shit. They all wear scarves in the summer. And they drive vintage bikes. And they carry books with them—not to read—but just to carry with them...they look up fuckin’ names on the Internet so they can drop them in conversation... everyone’s a piece-of-shit wannabe: “let’s play artsy music because it’s better than anything else.” They sit there *trying* to write artsy music, no one should *try* to write artsy music. That’s fuckin’ lame and gay...you sit down with a couple of guitars and a bass and a drum and you jam with your friends!

This logic is interesting as he rejects the same “indie white masculinities” sensibility that guided his fans’ criticisms of the Cape Breton dance culture. His accentuation of “lame and gay” was also notable as it was indicative of the language that Sean wanted to eradicate from the CBLocals board.

I noticed this attitude towards the “artsy” Halifax bands while observing only two artists from Halifax during the summer. One was Aide de Camp, a decidedly “non-artsy” rock band that played straight ahead pop punk which only a handful of patrons turned out to see. “This is a song we wrote about Cape Breton. I guess you’ll have to tell them about it because everyone else left!,” the singer told the audience in an irritated voice. In contrast, the other Halifax artist was the Toronto-residing Joel Plaskett who had just scored a major label hit with “Nowhere With
You.” Plaskett packed Smooth Herman’s with hundreds of people, capitalizing on a growing national notoriety.

Halifax mainstays promoted on HalifaxLocals such as Scribbler and Jenn Grant were absent. Sharp Like Knives were billed to play in August but ultimately disbanded before their appearance was to happen. No Halifax bands featuring Cape Breton-born members (Horses, Great Plains) appeared either, although such bands would ultimately return to Sydney for appearances later in the year and during 2007. I found this curious as there is only a four to five hour driving distance between the cities. Yet few musicians from the Halifax area made the trek to Sydney.

Feelings about class rose to the surface after I ended my fieldwork when deadwalk participated in another thread in 2007 in which he compared Cape Breton unfavorably to Halifax. He posted “cape breton is still full of knuckle draggers and now they know about the Internet” and MacGillvary (still posting as poorhaus) semi-backed up this sentiment by arguing that “anyone awesome I've met, with rare exception, has chosen to move the fuck out asap.” Veiled in the comments was a class commentary that the most worthy participants of a music scene had long departed— or would depart— Cape Breton when they had the chance.

ValerieM defended living in Cape Breton (“there’s assholes everywhere” and “for the record, I have no intentions of ‘getting the fuck’ out of CB”). brake described Cape Breton as the best place he had lived in his life and backed up ValerieM’s assertion about "assholes everywhere": “Nobody hates redneck Cape Breton-ites as much as I do (trust me on this, bi.), but that's one of your reasons for hating this place? C'mon.” High Class made comments reminiscent of Corbett’s criticism, writing “we don't need some thick brimmed glasses and scarf wearing LAME-O to tell us about it.”
deadwalk expressed surprise at the vitriol towards Halifax but I found in my time home that “Cape Breton vs. Halifax” was one of two conversations through which people expressed cultural tensions. As a city that had been dubbed the “new Seattle” in the 1990s, larger in population and renowned for its population growth, Halifax received a lot of attention that made users envious. Furthermore, I believe that Halifax residents, due to their proximity, were more likely to point out negative qualities about Cape Breton such as homophobia, lack of cosmopolitanism and cultural and social regression. The other conversation by which people expressed cultural tension was the one surrounding Cape Breton stereotypes, such as those found in the Cape Breton Summertime Revue. This revealed that the CBLocals scene has a very regional context that differentiates it from other parts of North America.

**The Cape Breton Stereotype and the Summertime Revue**

One of the memories that I hold of my childhood is road trips to Halifax to visit relatives during which my parents would play cassette recordings of the Cape Breton Summertime Revue. The songs celebrating "b-b-b-b-b-b-barbeque!!" and "going to the bungalow" always seemed a bit hokey, but harmless fun. A handful of comedy sketches were present on the cassettes, presenting me with my first real understanding of the Cape Breton accent or the "dumb Cape Bretoner" as a conscious *performance*. Despite the fact that the cassettes occasionally amused me, I did not see any characters in the sketches to which I related. I never asked to attend a show and my parents never took me.

There were strong opinions on class issues within Cape Breton as portrayed by Cape Bretoners. It is possible that one of the reasons users were sensitive to such criticism is that they latched to the CBLocals community as the alternative to a very stereotypical portrayal of Cape Breton as a backwards place with an ill-educated populace. When asked to describe CBLocals
without reference to areas outside Cape Breton, the description was genteel. One interviewee put it succinctly: “CBLocals, I think the demographic is middle-class, especially the AA shows.” Several users resented hearing from deadwalk and poorhaus that Cape Breton was culturally regressive.

Some older users attributed these perceptions to media portrayals of Cape Breton. Specifically, the Revue was targeted as having perpetuated such negative connotations. It was considered an embodiment of old Cape Breton entertainment culture to which CBLocals represented a change, even though many of interviewees actually professed enjoyment of it. Some members of the CBLocals community even had family members that had been involved in it. Despite the praise of many, dissenters felt that the Revue was part of an ongoing problem of Cape Bretoners portraying themselves negatively. They viewed the CBLocals scene as a form of elevating Cape Breton in terms of class and esteem.

The Revue was a sketch comedy and musical revue that began in the 1980s, last showing in 1997. Some of the characters and songs from the Summertime Revue became well-known among Cape Bretoners such as Bette MacDonald’s “Mary Morrison” character. Morrison donned glasses, a scarf over her head and spoke in a thick accent and dialect attributed to low-income Cape Bretoners. MacDonald described the character in a 2002 interview for The Globe and Mail as “a combination of women I saw when I went to church as a girl…any direction I looked in I saw women wearing a plain dress, sensible shoes, a white sweater buttoned at the top and a scarf” (p. R5). The thick accent in which Morrison spoke resembled that of many other Revue characters—or at least the ones that left any sort of impression on those who thought negatively of the Revue.
The Revue ran off and on for nearly twenty years and received acclaim in and out of the Sydney area. Many positive national reviews stressed how the show reflected the area's economic depression. One reviewer wrote: “the characters onstage are the recognizable types of a depressed locality. There is the genial welfare bum who is un-insultable…the corrupt local politician…and a very short fuse for pretension” (Conlogue, 1993). Another wrote, “They draw on the plight of the unemployed and the hypocrisy of politicians for much of their better skits. MacDonald does well with this male caricature (Wayne) who…isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer” (Cobb, 1995, p. H7). Yet Ray Conlogue (taking in the show for a second year) also felt the show was more of a lamentation of a time gone by than a reflection on the present. He felt that the performance of traditional songs like "The Hangman's Reel" and Stan Rogers' "Make and Break Harbour" "celebrate a way of life no longer practiced by most of the community” (Conlogue, 1994). It was this part of the show that irked some of the people I observed. Some remarked that the central themes of the Revue’s work were probably more salient in the pre-Revue stage show “The Rise and Follies of Cape Breton Island.”

Two critics reserved a heavy amount of bile for the Revue. Their criticism revealed the sensitivity that is often felt about stereotypes that surround Cape Breton:

- I thought “I'm gonna give this a chance, it's (local) and they made it work.” And I was like “wow, these are jokes I've heard everyday from my parents and my grandpa.”…it gives the stereotype— Cape Bretoners love fiddle music and they’re dumb! And they all have this accent, and they wanna know where their pogey is, and they drink and that's the Cape Breton Summertime Revue to me.

- Do you see anywhere else in the country doin’ that sort of thing? The only other place that comes close…is Quebec. Quebecers make fun of themselves because
at the same time they’re being very proud of their culture, which we are as well…(they) have an inferiority complex to (the rest of) Canada, so they make fun of themselves. Do they do it in Alberta? No. Do they do it in B.C.? No. Do they do it in Ontario? No. Not even in PEI do they make fun of themselves but we here in Cape Breton make fun of our neighbors. It really disturbs me!

During my fieldwork, I took in a feature show from Improv U, a sketch comedy team comprised of participants ages 19-26. The group advertised their shows on Locals and typically played to anywhere from 10-30 patrons at Club Capri on Sunday nights. One member felt it was important to show Cape Breton humor went beyond stereotypes: “there’s a lot of really hokey, lobster trap, hiking boots, fiddle stereotypes…but for every one of these people, there’s 2 or 3 that’s opposite.” The rehearsed summer event drew over 100 to Cape Breton University’s Playhouse. The material was decidedly less regional than Revue fare, with reference to generic pop culture such as roleplaying games, movies and generic situations applicable to anywhere in North America.

Few shared the detestation for the Revue with the above interviewees, but I commonly found resentment against the “dumb Cape Bretoner” stereotype. Despite this, it was common for some of the same people I observed to mimic that stereotype themselves. One of the aforementioned Revue critics, for example, modeled the stereotypical Cape Breton accent a couple of times in the interview.

Some attempts to mock the stereotypical Cape Bretoner also demonstrated how the norms on the CBLocals online forum and offline differed. Aaron Corbett played an open mic show at Club Capri, probably the most detested licensed drinking establishment among CBLocals users save for the Rum Jungle. A handful of Corbett’s friends gathered as he played a collection of
original songs with a handful of covers. One friend taunted him between songs: “turn down the GAY!” He then turned to another of Corbett’s friends and adopted the thickest fake Cape Breton accent he could muster and uttered, “see that buddy there? I’m gonna fuck ‘im, then I’m gonna beat him up for bein’ a fruit!”

Knowing all of the people involved, I interpreted the exchange as a humorous jab at the stereotypical uneducated Cape Bretoner, taunting a performer with accusations of effeminate behavior. From the ethnographer’s lens, it appeared to very much resemble a self-deprecating phenomenon common in regionalism. It also resembled the type of behavior that would easily have constituted a banning on the messageboard. Members of the Locals scene enjoyed when they were the ones poking fun at the stereotype of the behind-the-times Cape Bretoner. Yet they detested criticisms of cultural conservatism in Cape Breton when they felt it was veiled in a cultural pretense from Halifax.

The same individual who verbally expressed disdain for Halifax NASCAD students also found pretense to criticize in the typical Cape Breton bar patron. Whereas he saw Halifax scenesters fabricating an image of a cultured indie middle-class, he felt many Cape Bretoners imagined themselves in the image of their forefathers—blue-collar steel workers and coal miners. This was just as offensive to him.

He described his disdain for “Barrett’s Privateers,” a Stan Rogers fictional sea shanty about a 1700s privateer during the American Revolution. The song is popular in the Maritimes as a drinking song. He found a contradiction between the song and the white-collar middle-class reality of those who sung it during a night in the bar when 95% of the music selections were popular dance tunes:
I hate it when I'm at a bar and it's 2 o'clock in the morning and that song comes on. And all of a sudden, they stop trying to pick up the scantily clad women next to them and decide for two minutes and thirty seconds that "Oh yeah, man, I love Cape Breton, man!"...I think people wanna feel like they're in a pub in some place and they just got back from the mine. But sorry: you're at the Rum Jungle and the music is loud and gross and so are you. You work at a call center, there's no dust in your lungs, there's nothing like that. You're not slamming your beer mug, fighting with Charlie…get over yourself!

He called the patrons of one of the popular dance bars (the Rum Jungle) to task for a fake poverty fetish. He referred to the patrons not dressing in workman’s clothes but in typical twenty-something casual dress, more preoccupied with picking up women than class difficulties. This person saw the CBLocals scene as a group of people more in touch with their present-day culture than the majority of Cape Breton bar patrons, clinging to the traditional songs that Conlogue had labeled outdated years earlier in the Summertime Revue.

The issue of class was one area where CBLocals possessed some qualities atypical from the traditional conception of indie rock. The absence of an art school influence discussed by Frith was evident in two fashions. First of all, it was evident literally as few art students resided in the area. Second, it was obvious that many residents resented what they felt was the pretense that emerged from the art school culture that was present in Halifax.

People only articulated issues of class within the scene when it came to comparisons to Halifax and dislike of the Cape Breton stereotype of the uneducated fisherman/miner/steelworker who loved nothing but fiddle music. In the formation of the scene, class discussions centered on battles between the “freaks” and “jocks” and what scenesters felt was a battle between the
socially popular teenagers and the “outcasts.” This was a new articulation of what is more
typical of indie rock: the “geeky” students of high school emerging to play serious rock in
rebellion against the popular culture that surrounds them. Instead, CBLocals participants
rebelled against the stock types of both Cape Bretoners and pretentious indie rockers that
surrounded them.

**SEXUALITY**

The microphone was in bad shape during a July 2 AA show at St. Mark’s Hall in Glace
Bay. The singer of one band matter-of-factly stated during a brief soundcheck conducted
immediately before its set, “I can’t hear a thing.” The singer for Athymia, the most popular
metal band at CBLocals shows, found another way to express his discontent. Either offhandedly
or in direct reference to a storm of controversy on the messageboard, he remarked: “That is
extraordinarily gay!” It was the only time I heard that word uttered during an AA show that
summer.

Sean MacGillvary believed that CBLocals should act as a hailing point for the gay and
lesbian community. To Sean, the word “fag” and using “gay” in any derogatory way represented
an invisible violence and a point of exclusion. However, it is possible that by instigating such a
firestorm over the use of the word, he may have exacerbated the problem of making gay users
feel as though their presence was a point of contention. In Chapter 4, I discuss a controversy that
emerged over banning users for their use of words such as “fag” or “gay” (as an insulting term).
While MacGillvary declared his general intention was to improve conversation on the board, it
became quickly evident that this specific policy garnered the most attention.

MacGillvary sought to eliminate correspondence that used words referring to
homosexuals in any joking way. Some took to mashing the keyboard as a substitute for the word
“gay” in an attempt to counter Sean’s policy (e.g. "ffjkdjakdjdad"). Others equated his actions with censorship although he responded that he saw that as strictly a government issue ("unless the government is doing it, it's NOT CENSORSHIP!"). mousey was eventually banned after trying to justify how one could use the word "gay" as descriptive, but non-offensive in a June 22 post: "If my best friend(assuming that it is a male, like myself) bought me a birthday present, I would find that situation 'ghey.'"

Later in the summer, moderators cracked down on use of the word "gay" in other Locals forums, causing MonctonLocals user Nathan to visit the CBLocals forum on August 27: "This is completly gay......Censoring words is disgusting....no matter what context they might be used in. Fuck you CB Locals.......get a clue." mousey’s post indicated he saw little harm in calling a gift-giving gesture from a man “gay;” he simply felt that was the best word to describe what he felt was an atypical action for his gender. nathan simply stood by the idea that it was not valid to ban any word and did not see any issue in terms of inclusion/exclusion.

Of the users who defended leon, mousey and others, I could not identify any— on or off the Internet— that were over the age of 23. This was significant as it reflected generational tensions over issues of sexuality. Those in their mid-20s and over recounted how the scene had evolved from a harsh environment in which they felt that anything that “countered the norm” was chastised. Many recounted being taunted by fellow high school students and even those who were not gay had been the targets of gay slurs because they did not conform to the standards of behavior expected of them.

The CBLocals userbase almost unanimously frowned upon a sense of pervading social conservatism in Cape Breton. Informally, before and after my research, I had found that many of the people I spoke with believed the majority of Cape Bretoners held conservative attitudes
towards homosexuality. Some users were young enough to know the banned users but also old enough to have developed a friendship with the website founder. One recounted an example from high school and another from local elders that reflected what they felt was the “old Cape Breton” and its attitude towards homosexuality.

- No level headed sane person with a diverse group of friends wants other people to go on there saying “you’re a faggot” because that sounds nasty, just saying it. And in print, it looks just as bad unless you’re talking about a cigarette and you’re British and they just say “fag.” You throw that “got” on the end: man, that hurts!...I remember stupid, y’know, high school jocks throwing that word at me in high school. And they gave that word such a horrible stigma.

- (My parents) listened to Ashley MacIssac until they found out he was gay. My dad’s a really very Christian person and he doesn’t approve of homosexuality…after all those stories hit the newspaper about the young boy, my dad stopped listening to Ashley MacIssac.

For these users, it was essential that the board be a haven from such a hostile environment. They saw the importance of moderating online behavior as part of a wider mission to make the music scene welcoming to the homosexual community.

However, other users felt their conduct and the conduct of likeminded posters on the board was not homophobic. They suggested that even though they were younger and even though they derided emo music and fashion, they had encountered more homophobic environments than the CBLocals scene:
- (I've been to where) if someone would actually admit to being gay, they’d probably get beaten up. I definitely wanted to rebel against against the conservatism (of that area).

- I mean, sure, like everyone’s joked around and said “oh that’s gay” or whatever. But I never really thought that people were so serious about the thing to say that they would be willing to beat someone up…but that’s the way it is (in this other location).

The debate over which context proved offensive to the gay and lesbian community was noticeably sparse in one area: feedback from a number of openly gay and lesbian members of the community. The lack of visibility from this community was likely part of poorhaus’ motivation. He held to the older users’ belief that many members in the community might be afraid to identify as gay for fear of reprisal. One user identified as bisexual and responded to the issue on the messageboard:

When you use the word "fag" as some kind of belittling term, even if you aren't talking about gays, the association in my mind is of all of the times that I've been called a kjasdkjadsf by some bigot(s). It doesn't make me lose sleep at night, but it can be extremely offensive, but beyond that, just brings down the level of conversation…

As far as the "if you're gay you can say it", well, that's a complex one. The same reason black people have "reclaimed" the "n-word"…but I think that on a messageboard, especially with a rule against the usage of a word, it's best not to use it, because there isn't always an easy way to know that the person is
"reclaiming" it, and it's best to have rules like this (and) have little grey area.

(MatthewDotTK, posted on CBLocals board: Thu Jun 22, 2006 10:37 pm)

One line of thought from this post was consistent with my discussion with someone who did identify as gay. Like MatthewDotTK, this person claimed posts using “gay” and “fag” were not personally distressing but nevertheless supported Sean’s stance:

Interviewee: (People) associate that word with insulting someone. It is an actual term, but people use it as an insult more than describing somebody…some people still associate it with being a bad thing…myself, I pretty much ignore it. I’ve pretty much gotten used to it.

Bryce: When Sean starting banning people for using certain terms, were you in favor of it?

Interviewee: Um, to a point…I can sympathize with the people that got banned saying “I didn’t think anyone was offended”…but in the ideal world I would like to be in (laughs), I think it should have been “well, that’s not acceptable, you should know better, bye bye.”

Neither MatthewDotTK nor my interviewee appeared to be offended or discouraged from participating in the CBLocals community due to the online activity. The interviewee specifically stated having observed little, if any, direct jabbing at sexual preference while participating in the scene. This is perhaps why the interviewee played a very small role in the debate over bannings:

I didn’t feel like it was something I had to take part in. I felt it was taken care of well by Sean except he banned a couple of frequent users…like, there’s some people who deserved to be banned that deliberately start fights. I don’t wanna be picking up for him but Dylan, I don’t think, should really have been banned.
You’re kind of playing favorites but…(others) had a bad history of starting fights and arguments whereas Dylan, it was just “oops,” it came out and he’s still stupid and young.

The Locals website did not hail the gay community, even though most users expressed an outwardly open attitude. The only association I observed towards the subject of sexuality was the fact that use of the word “fag” was contentious. There were reactive measures but little in proactive measures to promote a welcoming attitude towards those outside of the heteronormative perspective.

It should also be noted that by way of comparison, the gay community was overrepresented within CBLocals compared to how most users perceived other communities within Cape Breton. The Maple Leaf lounge, a scene fixture, had been host to many Pride Week events in recent years. As aforementioned, when fiddler Ashley MacIssac declared himself gay, it was considered very atypical of the Cape Breton fiddling scene. Within the CBLocals scene offline, openly gay participants were not greeted as strange, but rare. There is nothing currently going on within the CBLocals culture that is challenging that conception.

GENERATIONS

I definitely think there’s two scenes. There’s the bar scene and then there’s the AA scene.

- A teenage interviewee's perspective

During the summer of 1996, I was a 19 year old university student who spent some of his spare time volunteering for Crack!, a group raising money in hopes of recording a compilation CD of local artists. As of June 18 that year, I was legally free to go to any bar I wanted for any show I wanted to see, but I still spent time at AA shows. While Crack! staged a fair share of
shows at the French Club (later renamed The Upstairs), it also staged events at Christ Church Hall, where all ages (AA) shows attracted audiences that typically drew larger crowds than what I witnessed at the French Club. The bands that played at the bars were typically the same bands playing at AA events and the people attending the shows were often one and the same—minus most of the "underagers" at the bar show.

Ten years later, the AA world seemed foreign to me, but not only because I had been away from the Cape Breton area on-and-off since 2000. All of a sudden—but maybe it was not sudden—it was not all that cool to be 19 or older and be at an AA show. My first AA show of 2006 was at the Ukranian Parish Hall, where I only saw only a handful of people over 19. I thought that perhaps this show was an anomaly and maybe in reality, there was more integration between AA and bar shows than I remembered. Instead, at my next AA show, I saw even fewer people over 19. I saw bands that I would never see play at a bar that year—Drowning Shakespeare, One Mercy Granted and Fatal Tragedy.

By the end of my third AA show, which also featured Drowning Shakespeare but also the popular Richmond Hill, I realized that none of these shows were anomalies. There was no way around it: the kids and the adults seemed to be in different scenes now. It was not a complete culture shock—some of the bands resembled the pop punk I had seen in the late-1990s scene. Still, I was not used to the feeling that what was going on at the AA shows constituted a different scene from that which was going on at the bar shows.

Subculture is usually associated with youth, a trend Andy Bennett (2006) traces to the development of Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies scholarship. Bennett suggests that the devotion of such scholars to youth was the most convenient method for assessing late capitalism since youth was both a “disempowered yet highly resistant social
group.” Thus, it “provided the perfect vehicle for subcultural theorists to interpret popular music and its attendant visual styles as politicized resources in the power struggles that characterize late capitalist society” (p. 222).

Scholars have investigated the complications music fans experience as they get older while trying to maintain a relationship to rock music and youth culture. Lawrence Grossberg noted in 1992 that rock n’ roll’s coming of age coincided with a “struggle over who ‘owns’ youth.” He recounted experiences of “baby boomer” teachers comparing themselves to the youthfulness of their students. The “straight and boring” students failed to meet their youth criteria which Grossberg argued was also an act of self-congratulation: “Implicitly, the teachers are congratulating themselves for their continued loyalty to their own youthfulness” (p. 183). Grossberg argued they were not assessing “youth” as a number but as a “state of mind” various generations strive to attain. He also argued that expressions such as “you’re only as young as you feel” were attempts to reclaim youth: it was much easier to hold on to it by attitude than by age.

Literature on various punk and metal scenes indicates scene involvement drops off as a participant gets older. Most are conscious of the role age plays in scene involvement. Linda Andes (1998) writes that few within the punk subculture remain past their early twenties. Those who do usually do so “at a more organizational or creative level: musicians, promoters, fanzine writers, artists etc.” (p. 221). The suggestion, also put forth by Deena Weinstein (2000) about metal fans, is that older rockers hold on to their music collections. However, unless they are organizationally or creatively invested, they back away from listening regularly or attending shows. Thus they remove themselves from the scene, even as they continue to hold on to the music.
Aesthetic rifts usually also emerge between generations, a point Bennett (2006) raises when comparing younger and older punk fans. Therefore the generations may share an interest in a broad genre of music but find little agreement on the specifics of which bands and/or subgenres to enjoy. I found this rift in CBLocals culture. Another rift—level of physical participation—somewhat contradicts Bennett’s findings. There is a near-universal agreement that there is a “young” and “old” CBLocals, but there are differing perceptions of what constitutes “old” in the scene. The overall impression from interviews and interaction is that both the perception of generational differences as well as the pragmatic generational differences led to few users championing youth as an essential part of the scene.

"Hands in Pockets, Arms Folded…"

I hate emo! Bunch of fucking emo-tards! All the bands I want to see haven’t been bands for at least six years now!

- an interviewee complains about the shift in the AA scene

The Sydney River Fire Hall sits next to a lumberyard. On June 1, a 50+ year old woman checking in on the venue complained of a burning lumber smell. All I smelled was cigarettes from the teenagers standing outside the venue for drags in between sets. In fact, many attendees continued to smoke or otherwise dwell during the music. Even as a non-smoker, the ritual was familiar to me—the "in-out" between sets and the people that would prefer not to watch one band or another and linger outside for a while.

During this show, the "in-outs" were more frequent as many of the set times were shorter than I remembered from CBLocals shows past. The set list times varied from 20 to 45 minutes. I told someone at the show about a recent AA show I attended in Ottawa, Ontario. Bands there played for no longer than 20-25 minutes each. He recounted the previous AA show in Cape
Breton, headlined by Oakville, Ontario band Rosesdead. “They played for 22 minutes,” he remarked, "that's pretty much the norm for a lot of these bands from Ontario."

The province of Ontario, specifically southern Ontario, had a big influence on the AA scene. MySpace played a far bigger role in this than I had anticipated as many bands were sending Cape Breton promoters messages via MySpace or via regular e-mail encouraging them to check out their MySpace. I interviewed a CBLocals user in his late 20s who believed that promoter Joe Costello was likely saying "no" to a multitude of Ontario bands asking to play Sydney. He also believed that Joe "could stand to say no to a lot more."

The show appeared to be a major event among the young people in attendance. I circled around the room picking up odds and ends of conversation and tried to get a feel for the audience. Among the T-shirts of attendees were 70s bands such as KISS and The Clash, but more notably of contemporary bands such as Alexisonfire, The Reason and the local headline band for the night, Richmond Hill. Most notably, few attendees appeared to be over the age of 18. This trend would repeat itself for most of the summer. When I attended an AA show, I stepped into a different world than I was in during a bar show.

The “emo/screamo” trend had a significant influence on CBLocals culture in the mid-2000s. The term “emo” described the fashion trends and soft acoustic music with pessimistic themes of love and loss. The performer closest to this sound during the summer of 2006 was 16 year old Danny MacNeil, who played several solo acoustic sets. The more prevalent fare at these shows was pop-punk from bands such as Richmond Hill and screamo bands like Drowning Shakespeare. Screamo was the hard rock equivalent of emo, described by a New York Times writer as “most often characterized by dual guitars…frequent shifts in tempo and dynamics and
by tension-and-release catharses…as aggressive as its lyrics are contemplative” (Dee, 2003, p. 26).

Much of the arguing on the CBLocals forum that had led to Sean MacGillvary’s arrival as moderator surrounded Drowning Shakespeare. They fit the description in many ways: they were a five-person group with both melodic and screaming vocals and songs filled with many of the dramatic pauses attributed to screamo. No one with whom I spoke described themselves or the bands they liked as emo or screamo that summer. Terms such as “punk,” “folk-oriented punk” and “metal” were bandied about, but no one dared to use the “e” or “s” words.

On this night and any other night I saw them play, Drowning Shakespeare and Richmond Hill drew attentive audiences of 50-75 spectators. Richmond Hill’s sound veered closer to pop-punk (much of the screaming vocals were absent). Some compared their sound to One Day Late, an on-again, off-again CBLocals pop-punk group dating back to the late 1990s. Therefore, it was unsurprising that a small number of 21 and over members attended their sets. They were one of the few bands that had the potential to bridge interest between the AA and bar crowds.

Yet I seldom saw the few over 21 attendees at this show at any of the bar shows I attended over the summer. These people typically associated with the pop punk of the AA scene that was prevalent in the late 1990s. While some of that music was still being played, the emo trend did dilute some of their enthusiasm. One of these people made an observation that echoed Grossberg’s description of how many people define their youthfulness by comparing themselves favorably to the current generation. In his study on older punks, Bennett (2006) found younger audiences favored more physical activity at shows such as moshing and crowd surfing. Audience members in their 30s and up are often looking for loud music while simultaneously
seeking a “quiet night” in terms of physicality. I heard the opposite from someone who argued that the inactivity of younger attendees was a source of his waning interest in shows:

You can go to a show and be happy that the kids are having fun. But how I defined—my perception of—kids having fun at a show…you remember the $ellout$ at (Gobblefest IV)? There was 200 people in the moshpit, watching the $ellout$ and moshing. That’s fun. This is how I define fun…kids dancing equals kids having fun. The emo punk phase came in which resulted in kids writing in journals, hands in pockets, arms folded, rocking back and forth and occasionally crying…this zapped me standing back at a show and watching them have fun…since (no other aspect was fun), I just stepped away from it.

Bar shows encompassed a wider range of genres and tended to feature more melodic music. Hence physical activity at bar shows was wildly divergent, ranging from thrashing to bands such as the Downfall, dancing to Tom Fun and Slowcoaster, or quiet observance of any given acoustic act. AA shows were far more predictable in terms of physical reaction. 50-80% of the audience usually stood and gently swayed from side-to-side to whichever band they were enjoying with a visible group of 20-50% enacting more aggressive activity such as moshing to any metal song or particularly fast punk song.

The differences in actual musical tastes between generations were easily understood by assessing two pieces of information: the acts recruited from outside Cape Breton to play a show promoted on CBLocals and the bands that played AA and bar shows most frequently. 22 “away acts” were brought to bar shows during my fieldwork, not including bands with members who previously resided in Cape Breton. 19 away acts played shows accessible to AA. Only two acts made both lists (Billy & The Lost Boys and Kid Gib), neither of whom attracted a large audience
to their bar show. The majority of away acts for AA shows played screamo music or variations of punk. Conversely, bar shows were comprised of acoustic/folk, funk, hard rock and pop/rock acts.

There were exceptions, of course. Not every person attending AA shows called for screamo bands (as evidenced by the aforementioned agitators in messageboard threads). There were a few users scattered about at the AA events in their 20s. The few users I interviewed under the age of 20 admitted that it was clear there were generational differences musically. Furthermore, most of the AA participants I did manage to interview felt the AA shows had grown stagnant. One teenager lamented being stuck in the AA scene, whereas another was getting the first taste of the bar scene and enjoying it:

- I find that all the headliner bands that come back or are here usually sound the same. That’s usually the one thing I’d like to see change for our scene…there’s a fine line between being influenced by bands and playing what these bands play. And I find what most of these headliner bands are doing…they’re trying to play exactly like (Alexisonfire)…you’re not influenced by this band: you’re copying this band.

- There’s a maturity at bar shows…you can only go see a band that sounds like Blink 182 or Alexisonfire so many times. But there are a lot of great (bar scene) bands that are doing different stuff. The Lighthouse Choir— amazing. Tom Fun are pretty good.

Alexisonfire was the often cited example of the popular band that young bands were striving to emulate. This aggravated these participants because they felt that musicians were developing an unoriginal style and duplicating a trend. Hence it returned to an argument over
authenticity. The bar scene, for the latter, represented a refuge from the contrived music of this scene. I actually found few interviewees that spoke openly about liking Alexisonfire. One teenager felt that part of their initial appeal was that they were different from other popular bands. Now that sense of difference had faded:

Their first album is amazing…I listened to it for an entire whole summer, non-stop and I was very excited when they came here for the first time…when I first heard them, it was something fresh, something powerful. I thought ‘this is different,’ especially coming from MuchMusic…but their second album wasn’t as great, I didn’t like it as much. I heard some of their newer stuff, I didn’t like it much either.

Where the AA scene differed from the bar scene was the number of users vocally complaining about the “trendy” direction in which the scene was going. The older users more often expressed dissatisfaction with emo/screamo music and minor irritation as they did not have to deal with it in their environment. Nevertheless, it was something they noticed, as this quote makes clear:

Way back in the day, there were kids who were losers who got together and started playing music…the fact that there are (now) certain types of kids who make certain kinds of music. It’s almost like the different kids that make different types of music are now the cliques from high school…there are definitely the “haves” and the “have nots” in our music scene right now and that annoys me.

The same interviewee enjoyed the Caper Radio coffeehouse— billed as an all-ages show yet attracting almost none of the AA patrons I saw for the remainder of the summer. Instead, a
handful of those participants arrived with most people I knew from the bar scene. As one teenager played a handful of 1990s covers from Radiohead and Weezer, my friend remarked, "here's a guy who remembers when indie rock was cool!" "Indie rock," in this definition, being different from the "emo" of the AA scene.

Those who attended AA shows that craved variety enjoyed the thought of moving on to bar shows. The CBLocals scene was an example of restrictions that inhibit younger age groups. Whereas rock music is often seen as rebellion against an older generation, many aspired to turn 19 so that they could seek refuge from their peers’ tastes.

One musician felt that critics of the AA scene failed to understand that the teenagers from the AA scene were unconcerned with accusations of trendiness. This person instead felt that the AA scene was merely a continuation of a long-lived tradition of teenagers disregarding the feedback of their elders:

Kids don't care what us older people think. They don’t care (about) people my age that hang out at Bunker’s that used to be there at Steelworker’s Hall and used to play there…they don’t care about that. They care about what they’re doing now. And they don't care if we think they all look the same…the kids are having fun and they're starting to take interest in something that's not on MuchMusic.

Another participant familiar with both sides of the scene noticed another result of the divide. He cited past Gobblefests in which promoters would insist that every band playing a bar show must also play an AA show because “the kids should be able to see everything and bar shows eliminate the biggest chunk of the audience.” I had participated in the promotion of many of the early Gobblefests and I too had heard—and made—that argument. I recalled that during the staging of the 2000 East Coast Unauthorized show during East Coast Music Award week,
our promotion group felt conflicted about having separate bills for the AA and bar events. As manager of Caper Radio at the time, I wrestled with the question: "shouldn't everyone have the chance to see the act that they want to see?"

However, much time had past and some bands that built their AA following after that period were already entrenched in the bar scene, with AA shows mostly behind them. My interviewee felt discussions and dilemmas over AA and bar shows would be moot in 2006 because the two audiences had become so separate:

There’s a group that exercised dominance over the AA crowd, which is that whole I Was a Spy/One Day Late/Sydney River kids crew that turned 19 and left AA show in a gradual departure and eventually made it into the bar shows…now (they and the House of Rock) have merged under the House of Rock umbrella and have maintained ‘we are the bar scene.’ Because they’re the bands that people like to see in bars.

Generational identity was more complex than what style of music one liked. Cape Breton offered a different demographical environment from many other music scenes. The outmigration of people 18-35 was significant, leaving those in that age group with a deficit of peers as compared to those younger members of the scene. Younger CBLocals saw the bar scene as a separate atmosphere which provided aspirations that had not existed for teenagers in the past. In the CBLocals scene, some lamented feeling “old” very quickly and others readily aspired to dispose of their “youth.”

“I’m Afraid I’m Becoming That”

It is difficult to describe the age of the CBLocals scene. As stated in Chapter 1, Most interviewees identified the mid-1990s as the genesis. An archived events listing on the
CBLocals website features a synopsis for 1992 shows at The Beat. The writer concedes that it is presumptuous to describe it as a genesis. Yet he is unable to locate an earlier birth period:

I'm not sure about that one because there definitely (sic) were bands playing in their basements and other places before the Beat; but in the summer of 92' when I got back from Ontario this is the place where I met the bands like FLack Bag-the Smiling Uniks; Delores; and a lot of the original scenesters.

My life in the scene matched this description as I certainly had been introduced to little non-Celtic or non-traditional music from Cape Breton that pre-dated the 1990s— either as a teenager or as a 2006 ethnographer. I had heard a handful of Matt Minglewood songs growing up and vaguely understood him to represent an "older guard" of Cape Breton musicians. I did not even think of him as an "indie rock" (or even rock) musician in any way despite his blues/rock influenced sound. People would occasionally reference Phycus, particularly when electronic music artist Art Damage made an appearance, but I did not hear any of this band's music until I went to university.

I encountered a base of interviewees who shared this sense of cultural amnesia. As few interviewees refer to the scene’s lineage beyond the 1990s, the definition of what constituted a scene elder often fit people still in their 20s. In fact, some people referred to themselves as “old” even though they were only a few years removed from teenage life. In a variety of social interactions and interviews, I observed people in their 20s refer to people in their 30s or late 20s as "uncles" or "grandfathers" of the scene. These same people would envision themselves as "older people" when comparing themselves to the AA crowd despite many of the people at those shows being only 3-5 years their junior. Even someone in his mid-teens referred to other AA fans as “kids.”
The shorter history of the CBLocals scene made the CBLocals messageboard and scene in general seem very young. Two participants in their early 20s described the culture shock of visiting the HalifaxLocals board and realizing how many users in their 30s and beyond frequented it by comparison to CBLocals:

Interviewee #1: A lot of people on the Halifax messageboard are a lot older because there was a thread on HalifaxLocals that was "where were you 17 years ago?" A lot of people were like "I just graduated from King's..."

Interviewee #2: …I was two!

Interviewee #1: That's probably one of the reasons why those boards moderate themselves much better because obviously when people are older and more mature.

Interviewee #2: Halifax doesn't really have an AA scene, that I know of really. I went to an AA show in Halifax at the One Love Cafe. Me and (my friend) were the youngest people there. Everyone there was older than me.

Members of the scene in their late 20s and early 30s were also more easily able to identify themselves in authoritarian roles since many of the shows staged within the community in the mid-to-late 1990s were entirely driven by teenagers or people in their early 20s. Some stressed that with no precedent by which to establish putting on shows, they had to become the elders right there on the spot. One woman vividly recalled her first AA shows: "I couldn't believe that there (were) this many people in this small room and no one over 30. I think the scene gave a lot of freedom to people...no one was yelling 'turn it down!'" A second interviewee recalled that support from previous generations was scant or non-existent:
For talent like Slowcoaster, Carmen Townsend to develop…Cape Breton is not a place that nurtured that ever. We had to fight for it tooth-and-nail, we had to battle for it. This generation and not even half-a-generation before that, people like Rod Gale…we built something awesome.

Many who grew up with the original remnants of the scene had moved out of the area. A handful of musicians had continued in the scene but had progressed to the bar scene, namely in House of Rock bands. Very few people in their late-twenties and early-thirties had supplanted those who moved away. As such, it was difficult for one in their mid-twenties and beyond to expand a group of peers interested in listening to and supporting independent rock music in Cape Breton. Many users felt prematurely old, so to speak, since they were left with no option but to socialize with university students in order to expand their social group. Users in both their 20s and their 30s described living in an area lacking of many people ages 25-50 as an aging experience in and of itself. One aged in the mid-20s already feared becoming an elder whereas another, well into his 30s, felt more out of touch than ever:

- It's really weird. When you stay here, your friends gradually get younger and younger. I don’t think I hang out with…there's very few people my age…well, maybe 22 or 23, they're my little sister's age…but you find the people with the same interests or you have some things in common, but most people my age? Gone. Rod and Darryl used to be “the old people.” Now I’m afraid I’m becoming that!

- I just wish that maybe I could be more involved…I feel my age pretty harshly sometimes when I’m looking at the site (laughs). Like, I’ve never heard of the bands and they’re coming here from different places and I’m like ‘oh yeah, I
guess I’m kinda out of it.’ So I guess it’s not that I wish the website would change, I wish I could be more clued in. What’s that, they said in the 60s?: “Never trust anyone over 30?” Well, I’m well over 30 (laughs).

CBLocals had undergone a generational divide since the website’s creation. In the beginning of the staging of bar shows, there was a large crossover of the AA and bar show audiences as most of the 19-22-year-olds would still frequent the church and fire halls to see their favorite local bands. The recollection of 1998 shows in the industrial area displayed in the “Shows” section of CBLocals is sparse with many Halifax shows mixed into the list. Of the shows that actually took place in Cape Breton, 23 of 24 were AA events. Conversely, re-visiting the archive for 2006 events displays revealed 289 events, 212 of which were bar or licensed events.

In 2006, the crossover between the AA and bar shows had diminished as there was plenty of refuge in the bar show community from the non-drinking, full of kids, emo/screamo AA shows. Some users had tried to hang on to AA shows as it had not been entirely out of the norm to see a large contingent of attendees in their 20s at such shows in the late 1990s and even into the very early 2000s. Most of the people I interviewed in 2006, however, had backed away from the AA scene entirely. Some found it hard to let go but came to the realization that they were no longer relating to the environment, like this former AA devotee did: "I know that I forced myself to go to AA shows for a little while because I felt sad that I didn't want to go. And I would keep going, I would (say) “I love...all...ages...shows, I do, I do!” "But," she concludes with a laugh, "I didn't!"

Most users I interviewed made a strong distinction between the AA scene and the bar scene. Furthermore, some even assumed I was referring only to the AA scene when I mentioned
the "CBLocals scene" (ironic given the disinterest from teenagers to volunteer for my project). Whatever the association made between the AA shows, bar shows and CBLocals, almost everyone acknowledged the divide and it seemed as though AA shows were either ideal or something from which to "graduate" to get to the bar shows. For some, the migration was a matter of taste. For others, it was a matter of articulating oneself as an adult. AA shows used to carry the reputation of being more than just “for kids” but with over 10 years of scene activity logged, that impression was changing. One person had not turned 19 yet but already saw his peers abandoning the AA scene:

I went to school with people that are all 19 now. So they’ve all moved on to the bar scene…I can go to some bar shows without ID but I’m still in the age group for AA. It’s more of a personal thing, I guess. It’s kinda like when you’re 19, 20, 21, those people go to the bigger AA shows like Gobblefest but they don’t go to the smaller acoustic sets, the small shows that happen. Which is not so great because that’s when the bands you don’t see so often play. I think once they say “I can go to bar shows,” then (they’ll also say) “I’m not going to go to AA shows anymore.”…I think it’s that they don’t want to be around the kids, people 14 or 15.

Bar shows offered more personal freedoms, namely being legally able to drink, but also it afforded the attendees the general sense of being an adult. The AA environment had once been the only avenue for scene members to pursue. Older participants recalled the mid-1990s when there were few if any bars supporting live original music, hence there had been no grown-up world to which the CBLocals users aspired to graduate. While users in their 20s found
themselves getting "old before their time," 18 year old users already found themselves moving up to the bar scene.

**CBLocals Gets Old**

Bennett argues that there is an advantage to growing older within the punk scene, which is that the identity associated with the music is internalized. These audience members are more readily willing to unchain themselves from obligations of visual markers associated with their favorite music. I did not find that to be completely the case within CBLocals. As prior sections have demonstrated, separating oneself from the upscale “regular bar crowd” in dress and manner remained important for CBLocals participants.

I discovered that the CBLocals website was more significant to older users because it was part of the internalization process of who they were. Yet at the same time, many of these same older users associated the phrase "CBLocals scene" with the AA scene from which they were absent, rather than the bar scene in which they were very present. This corresponds with Joanna Davis's (2006) findings on “aging identity” and the “scene,” which she claims are dialectical concepts that play a significant role in identity formation over time. “Aging punks” see themselves and their peers in a number of roles, such as "unsuccessful punks" (scene rejecters or stagnant punks) and "successful punks" (legends, career punks or corporate incorporators). Participants look to people in these various roles to idealize their participation in the scene in the long-term.

In the CBLocals community, few of these roles seemed readily apparent from either interview data or online postings. However, the website was part of a continuing habit with which they built their daily routine. Many of the longtime users complained of no longer relating to the younger audience’s music, that the messageboard was filled with pointless
arguments and that the corepage had grown stagnant with little new content. Yet few were willing to completely abandon the habit as it defined a significant part of their identity. It was something they “just did.”

It became clear during the course of soliciting volunteers that the CBLocals website struck a larger chord with users 21 years of age and older. Hence a major discrepancy resulted in which few attendees strictly relegated to the AA scene showed up in the interview data. I actively attempted to recruit them for the project, leaning heavily on the recommendations of the few people who appeared to have “cred” with this group. It resulted in some people signing up for an interview, but very few followed through to participate. When I mentioned the website in conversation to these potential participants, they would often shrug and offer up that they felt they would be of little help.

Those who did participate tended to resist the concept of authority on the board. Hence those over the age of 21 associated the younger generation with these critics whose contributions they did not welcome. The chief complaints were their lack of substantive contributions (too many “one liners” instead of fully fleshed out posts) and too many insults instead of constructive discussion, as this person stated:

(Harry Doyle) got Sean to come in and banninate the peasants and block the users who were really garbagy…Jeffolation and a bunch of dumb, young boys who really like aggressive music and kind of take the whole mentality to heart and really just become complete dickheads to everybody. And have nothing useful to say. And then they pick on people…who can't not argue back with them, who (have) no self control and are completely at the mercy of the taunting and just makes all these messy things.
One participant in his 30s suggested the communication styles of older and younger users clashed, differentiating between "writing for the printed page" and "writing for the Internet." Since users 25 and older favored the former, younger users had little patience for them, he argued. Older users had little patience for terser, less grammatically correct responses. He also saw a tendency from younger users to connect the CBLocals scene to the functioning of Cape Breton society as a whole.

The general Cape Breton tendency to be cynical does in general annoy me. When I see it in the music scene, it annoys me even more because this is something that I always felt saved me from that cynicism. When people who don’t have a long-term history in the scene bring the negativity that they have, bring the negativity that they feel as a young person growing up in Cape Breton and dump it on the music scene? That really annoys me.

This perspective was countered by someone within the AA scene, who felt that such commentary did not represent the majority of AA participants. This person stressed that the most active teenage participants in the music scene seldom visited CBLocals. In other words, the younger generation was getting its reputation based on the fact that many of the "bad apples" turned to CBLocals to vent their frustrations:

You gotta look at the messageboard as 30-40 people, five or six of whom go to shows on a regular basis. And considering there’s probably anywhere from 60 to 250 people at shows at any one time, five to six people that go to shows all the time. So you can’t really judge our music scene based upon what you see on this Internet messageboard or this Internet website because a high degree of users in
the music scene that go out and buy stuff and go and see bands and actually enjoy themselves aren’t involved with this website.

My experience trying to invite teenage involvement in my study supported this assertion. Few expressed interest in talking about CBLocals and a couple openly mentioned that they felt they had nothing to say about the website specifically. Older users tended to reflect negatively on the generation gap because their primary reference points were the CBLocals website and messageboard. As Chapter 4 details, the messageboard was a haven for conflict that was barely visible in the actual show environment, this user and others felt it misrepresented how older users saw “youth” within the CBLocals scene.

Users over 25 failed to retain a sense of youth due to their role as “Generation One” in the music scene. The comment "we built something awesome" reflected a general belief from most older interviewees was that the scene was of their construction, rather than a continuation of something that came before. Few of them cited themselves as a reference point of youth, but rather saw themselves as the mothers and fathers of the scene. I observed that they had difficulty watching the younger generation steer the scene in a different direction but also that the younger generation placed less importance on the scene overall.

CONCLUSION

Cape Breton as a whole has a largely white population, as cited in Chapter 1. So it is not surprising that there are no participants of color. The result of this is that the concept of ethnicity is expressed through Scottishness rather than through visible difference. CBLocals musicians articulate their identity and difference through the dialog of the Scottish imprint on Cape Breton culture and how they seek to disprove it and rebel against it. They do not focus on how the scene fails to challenge the typical structure of race and ethnicity present in indie rock. This is both
indicative of a scene with a typical white makeup but also of a specific local tension not found in other scenes.

The indie “masculinity” is evident both in literal and figurative terms. Both the website specifically and the scene generally do not hail women's participation. Moreover, discussion on gender is almost non-existent within the scene. Even though content regulations are common in Canada, and I discuss this further in Chapter 3, the idea of FEMCON arouses little passion. It is not an issue for the musicians even though it is indicative of the complaints of scholars such as Coates that there is exclusionary behavior taking place within all of rock music. In this regard, CBLocals is neither explicitly locally unique nor challenging any conventions of indie rock.

The most pressing example of CBLocals being reflective of the importance of locality is class. Class does not become a salient issue among the majority of CBLocals participants unless it is framed within regionalism, rather than through a global perspective. Most specifically, the regional tension between Halifax and Cape Breton reflects tensions between rural and urban scene participants as it leads to a rejection of the art school roots that other indie scenes cherish. In this sense, CBLocals is differs from most indie rock scenes in that it rejects the cosmopolitanism that indie rock normally celebrates and reflects working class music scenes in a post-industrialist environment. However, it does not challenge any class divides within the music scene or in Cape Breton in general. We cannot make a case for the CBLocals website transforming class relations either within the scene or Cape Breton in general. It does, however, provide an illuminating forum for people to express their dissatisfaction with issues of regionalism.

The fierce debate over the use of words like “fag” and “gay” on the CBLocals messageboard did not hail greater participation from the homosexual community. The scene
conformed to a heteronormative structure typical of most indie rock scenes. It is nevertheless significant that those within the scene still saw their community as more tolerant of alternative perspectives of sexuality compared to the rest of Cape Breton. The website actually appeared to hinder participation in that it degraded sexuality strictly to discussions about language rather than enhancing discussion on the gay role in the community.

Finally, the generational divide typically represented in all of rock music is present in CBLocals. Rock music often represents youth and older users within CBLocals struggle with the differences they have with teenage taste and culture. What is most striking about CBLocals, however, is that the relatively new development of the scene accentuates smaller generation gaps. Being 25 in the CBLocals scene is considered somewhat old in comparison to most North American music scenes where it is not viewed as such. Therefore “youth” is articulated differently within the scene, regardless of national or international norms. The website had little impact but regional demographics (a significant flight of most people between 18-35 year olds) certainly did.

In summary, the Internet does not challenge the typical structure of an independent music scene. For the most part, the “white masculinities” that Bannister cites are ever present within the CBLocals scene. The majority of the musicians are men, they are all white and they celebrate a standard for music that is removed from the bodily and is focused more on the artistic and literary. However, furthermore, the importance of regionalism is understated as issues of ethnicity, generations and class are expressed more through regional difference than they are through homogenous similarities to other indie rock scenes.
CHAPTER 3: THE LOCAL MATTER OF SELLING OUT

i would whore myself to Aselin Debison for a couple of hours a day before i would whore myself to eds or the summer job lottery.

- rory compares playing for a pop star to working for a call center

(Posted on CBLocals board: Thu Apr 14, 2005 9:45 am)

I hate (the) sense of exclusivity and, like, bands being better than other bands for reasons of their attitude. And for reasons of...if you say no to making money off of your band, that means that you're upholding some sort of moral high ground or something...making a matter of personal preference into moral right or wrong issues.

- An interviewee and musician defends professional aspirations

This chapter reveals that conversations about selling out are sometimes rooted in concise discussion about dependence—specifically what means musicians depend upon funding and/or sustaining their projects. They are also sometimes rooted in issues of aesthetics—specifically whether or not bands aspire to an "indie" aesthetic or whether or not their sound is determined by commercial rather than personal interests.

I recognize that "selling out" is a continually negotiated term between artists, artists and their fans and art communities in general. This chapter reveals the tensions that rise to the surface in the process of negotiating authenticity, rather than making proclamations on what does or does not constitute selling out. As Michael Newman (2009) argues in his assessment of indie film and music, those who attempt such analyses "(crucially misrecognize) the relation of indie culture to commercial culture as one of actual autonomy—as if such a thing were possible" (p. 33). Regardless of whether or not such autonomy is possible, the term "indie" reveals a struggle for authenticity:
The dynamics of mainstream and alternative cultures are more complex, relational, and fluid than the brand-bully position allows. As I have argued, the key notions of autonomy and authenticity are hardly absolutes. They are mobilized when expedient by producers and consumers eager to distinguish their culture from the Other of the mainstream. We might also see these terms as ideals toward which some strive rather than qualities inherent in a particular practice or product (p. 33).

However, with no clear terms established on what constitutes selling out, authenticity lives as a continuing negotiation process rather than an absolute. Few people that I interviewed were able to articulate specifically what actions constituted “selling out” and what actions did not. The universal agreement was that “it’s not what you do, but why you do it.” If you played music you loved hoping to get paid, that was fine. If you played music to get paid regardless of whether or not you liked it, that was not fine. As one CBLocals singer declared:

When you think of money over spending time working on your music and traveling and playing to live audiences and y’know, really doing what you want to, that’s selling out. When you’re just writing music because it’s going to be radio-friendly and you’re going to get paid.

If you stopped playing Slipknot because you lost interest, this was fine. If you lost interest in Slipknot because they were no longer popular, that was not fine. Moreover, if you were aping a popular band like Alexisonfire while losing interest, this was even worse. This musician expressed irritation at a fellow local for this:

What gets me is when people regurgitate Alexisonfire and say it’s what they’ve been doing for years and years and years when six years ago they were playing
Slipknot covers… I know someone that used to play in a nu-metal band when nu-metal was the biggest thing. Now he denounces it completely.

“Selling out” is an issue of authenticity. Few could articulate what it meant, but most interviewees valued some degree of “earnestness” in artists as opposed to those deemed insufficiently interested in the quality of art. This became contentious in the mid-2000s when the House of Rock (HOR) began to emerge as the most popular collective of bands within the scene. The HOR applied to the provincial government for grants to fund music recording. Popular all-ages (AA) bands such as Richmond Hill and Drowning Shakespeare followed suit. HOR bands also played at venues that many CBLocals users loathed and garnered audiences much larger than other CBLocals bands. Both their government funding and appearances at “popular bars” were points of discussion during my interviews that raise issues surrounding the dialog of “selling out.”

The Cape Breton area and its sociopolitical dimensions present a unique context for such discussions and debate. I frame varying philosophies within the discourse of amateurism and professionalism and Adorno’s development of Marxist theory surrounding art. The CBLocals music scene provides examples of musicians and opinions not accounted for by conventional discourse on either professionalism or alienation. I believe this is because we have too often looked at selling out and authenticity from a global or national perspective, rather than isolating what may constitute these values from location to location.

I begin this chapter by discussing the concept of “selling out” and how it is related to the concept of alienation. I then lay out a theoretical survey of professionalism and amateurism as it relates to music. I argue that the CBLocals scene provides a very specific context for discussions about selling out, based on the history of national government involvement in the arts and local
distrust towards provincial intervention. I recount a variety of conversations within the scene both on and offline to demonstrate this. These conversations touch upon both practical and aesthetic issues, as well as consequences, of differing attitudes towards professionalism.

SELLING OUT AND ALIENATION

You have to be particular or you wind up having no standards… I’m talking about respecting your own tastes and values. People out here are so willing to compromise to the point where they have no personality anymore. They’re just all one big throbbing mass at Smooth Herman’s. You ask them what they like and they go “oh, all kinds of things…”

- An interviewee defends “snobby” tastes and explains a dislike for popular bars.

There has long been a division between the popular and other forms of music, whether it is described as "fine art," "classical" or "refined." I use the work of Theodor Adorno as a lens to understand the theoretical underpinnings of criticism towards popular music. Adorno is one of the most identifiable scholars of the Frankfurt School of philosophy heavily influenced by Marx. Adorno adopts very specific opinions about what he dubs the “culture industry.” He believes that the commodification of culture serves as another function of ideological domination over the general populace. All the while, the economy surrounding these items supports dominant political ideologies and structures.

Adorno is particularly critical of the popular music of his time, broadly classified as “jazz,” in his controversial 1936 essay “On Jazz” (1989). He argues industrialization of music creates a top-down structure. Musicians have little power and ergo, less of a chance to express themselves creatively. He specifically criticizes jazz for offering false liberation to its listeners. He argues that while the genre is celebrated for improvisation, it is no more than a controlled
façade of rebellion. All of the supposed innovations and improvisations from jazz musicians masked basic standardization of rhythm. “The eight-bar measure, and even the four-beat half measure, are maintained, their authority unchallenged. Simple melodic and harmonic symmetrical relationships correspond to this as well” (p. 46). To put Adorno’s argument in other words, jazz music may have its flourishes and may appear to give more freedom to the musicians, but it is still a slave to the beat like any other popular music.

It is the subject of debate as to whether or not Adorno writes about “good jazz” (Witkin, 2000) but his advocacy against standardization remains significant. Standardization, in Adorno’s logic, breeds conformity which in turn breeds passive musicianship, passive listening and passivity in general. Any sense of ownership over the music is false; the industry has a hold over it. Participants are merely the “throbbing mass” alienated from the self-expression and creativity offered through music.

Further scholarship suggests a much more fluid relationship between commercialized and non-commercialized music. Dick Hebdige (1978), Sarah Thornton (1996) and Ryan Moore (2005) instead identify “selling out” as an issue of co-option. As subcultures celebrate unique commodities and art, commercial interests swoop in and make them part of mass culture. The work actually begins as a unique individual expression, but is eventually subsumed into the dominant culture. Each scholar also suggests that in this fluid relationship between music subcultures and mainstream music culture, music scene participants believe strongly in not “selling out.” They attribute this to issues of familiarity, ownership and personal identity associated with music.

Fans usually raise questions about how an artist came to achieve a wider audience or greater financial success. Thornton contrasts British clubbers’ attitude towards artists featured
on the popular television program *Top of the Pops* to those artists who manage to make retail charts through magazine reviews and underground club play (pp. 122-3). These clubbers assess that the latter is an “earnest” way to achieve success that involves no compromise of value in the music for the sake of increasing record sales.

There are values other than perceived earnestness that play into evaluations of selling out. Thornton also astutely argues that what is at stake in these evaluations is the fans’ sense of ownership and familiarity with music. Hence even if an artist subverts the *Top of the Pops* method of commercial stardom, fans may still resent having to “share” the band with a wider audience. In the *Hype!* (1996) documentary featuring the commercial rise of Seattle "grunge", a young teenager expresses his anguish at the fact that more and more people are dressing like him and liking the band that he likes. When asked why it “pisses him off” so much, he replies assertively “because I liked them first!” Thornton sees the same phenomenon within the club scene:

> Within club undergrounds, it seems to me that ‘to sell’ means ‘to betray’ and ‘selling out’ refers to the process by which artists sell beyond their initial market which, in turn, loses its sense of possession, exclusive ownership and familiar belonging. In other words, ‘selling out’ means selling to outsiders (p. 124).

Moore (2005) explicitly points out what the consequences of outsiders’ involvement to subculture means. For those who perceive themselves within the subculture, much of their identity is rooted to opposition and to the belief that they are sharing something rare. When the masses get a hold of the same music that they enjoy, what they once held to be “scarce” is now plentiful.
... they experience a sense of alienation because they no longer own or control the culture they have produced and their expressions of rebellion are now consumed by the “mainstream” audience they define themselves against. By definition, subcultural capital is a scarce commodity that can only belong to a minority. The threat of media, fashion, advertising, and the music industry is that they will leak this inside information to the majority. When their subculture is commercialized and exposed to the mass market, insiders experience nothing less than a loss of identity because their sense of themselves depends on an opposition to “the mainstream” (p. 233).

Marx linked alienation as a condition to the capitalist definition of labor. He argued that one’s relationships and sense of self were defined by his or her productive activity. As he felt that capitalism removed people further from a sense of creativity and individualism over what they did for a living, he argued it created a sense of alienation. Moore instead identifies alienation in the consumption, rather than the production, of popular music. The more people that consume the producer’s product, the more they feel part of what the aforementioned "snob" describes as the “throbbing mass.” Thus they feel a less personal connection to the music.

Yet the simple desire to move away from the "throbbing mass" only complicates issues of "selling out" further. Musicians participate in what Pierre Bourdieu (1993) describes as the field of cultural production, which in itself operates within the field of power. Bourdieu argues that there are two levels of hierarchization within the literary and artistic fields. The heteronomous principle of hierarchization "is success, as measured by indices such as book sales, number of theatrical appointments, etc." whereas the autonomous principle of hierarchization is "degree specific consecration" or "prestige" (p. 38). Bourdieu argues that the latter principle of
hierarchization thrives on autonomy: "the more completely it fulfills its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization." In a completely autonomous field of production, Bourdieu argues that "the only audience aimed at is other producers" and that this field, all ordinary economic rules are subverted— the producer eschews pursuit of profit, declines honors and rejects any formal training.

This is problematic because one can argue that a purely autonomous field of production does not exist. Yet many artists aspire to operate in such a world, which Bourdieu suggests is the reason that no form of "economism" can fully anticipate how the market will react to artists nor how artists will react to it. Many musicians wish to perform the songs that they want to perform and aspire to some level of "indie cred," while understanding that in order to continue to perform, they must take some level of economic consideration into play in order to continue their practice. Thus authenticity shifts from a pure possibility (in Bourdieu's terms) to a more abstract concept that can be manipulated within the market.

In an assessment on "indie cinema," Michael Newman (2009) argues that "indie cinema" is a "contradictory notion" as it "implicitly criticizes hegemonic culture" while simultaneously it "is itself commercial and that also serves to promote the interests of a class of sophisticated consumers" (p. 17). As such, whatever the intentions of the people using them, "indie" or "authentic" are commercially loaded terms used by commercial producers to target specific consumers. Newman notes that artists themselves have negotiated the terms of selling out with themselves and their audiences, citing artists such as Moby and Fatboy Slim in the early-2000s who sold songs for commercial use. These artists, he argues, maintained credibility because their actions were positioned as an alternative to another corporate structure: commercial record labels and music stations. "It was seen as a way of finding exposure for interesting music that
would be unlikely to break into the increasingly safe and homogenous radio and MTV playlists controlled by the major labels" (p. 21).

This is not to suggest that there are not artists that are striving to get closer to the true autonomous field that Bourdieu describes. I use Newman's point only to illustrate that issues of authenticity, specifically the concepts of "indie" and "selling out," are continually negotiated with the dominant field of hierarchization as well. When I talked to members of the CBLocals scene and the subject of “selling out” or “compromising” came up, many different perspectives emerged and not all believed that catering to economic imperative automatically implied selling out. I encountered arguments that echoed the Frankfurt perspective and arguments resembling those of Thornton and Moore's subjects. Some focused on production: they felt that popular bands playing derivative music were slaves to trends and removing their individuality from their music. Others focused on the consumption: they felt the venues in which a band played and the audience to whom they played had more to do with selling out than the type of music being played.

Such discussions are not immune to local contexts; each of which is possessed with its own economic considerations. A global example of selling out is that of a band that gains a small national following and decides to sell their music to a major record company for increased sales and notoriety. Yet participants on the CBLocals forum did not solely focus on these types of scenarios when they discussed "selling out." Some considered playing a certain bar to be selling out. Some considered getting help from the government to be selling out. The CBLocals scene is one that is both regionally and nationally distinct in terms of how music scene participants view ethics. Fully understanding this requires an analysis grounded in an understanding of the theory of professionalism as it relates to music.
Person by person, CBLocals musicians placed themselves differently on the scale of professionals, amateurs and dilettantes. Some had high professional aspirations, others did not. Others were willing to alienate themselves from some of their musical practices—seeing it as “just a job”—while strongly connecting themselves to other music they played. It is important to discuss where delineations between professionalism, amateurism and dilettantism in music occur. As we see later in this chapter, the CBLocals scene offers a distinct perspective on how the government plays a role in these delineations.

PROFESSIONALS, AMATEURS AND DILETTANTES

Music is so universal that it is taken for granted that most people will interact with it at some level regardless of their actual profession or social standing. Thomas Regelski (2007) writes “musicking is a key social activity in which everyone has a role. Everyone, then, participates with skill and knowledge, even in societies that recognize music specialists” (p. 22). Therefore, music attracts a large number of casual participants, who devote time to a musical instrument, singing, and songwriting or arranging with no formal training and/or no professional pursuit in mind.

One could describe all of these casual participants as "amateurs" but it is not that simple. Robert Stebbins (1992) believes that the term “amateur” is not a clear one. In this case, I use his terms “amateur” and “professional” as they would describe philosophies towards music. The amateur philosophy embraces “music for music’s sake.” It is not necessarily a rejection of the profit motive but rather a demotion of that motive in favor of artistic motives. The amateur plays music in the hopes of getting better at it; theirs is not a casual pursuit they plan to abandon. Yet their long-term goals regarding employment do not involve music in any way. The professional philosophy is one that incorporates short-term goals of profit and/or long-term goals of a career
in music. The professional is not necessarily aspiring to get rich but places a greater weight on economic factors than their amateur contemporaries when making artistic decisions, such as the recording of songs or playing of shows.

There are participants in music that do not fit neatly into either the professional or amateur category. For example, karaoke is a practice that brings fans on to the stage to sing songs regardless of training, ability or audience demand. In his analysis of karaoke, Rob Drew (2001) proposes that the activity is part of a “radical notion that culture is ordinary— that music is not marginal to daily life, something by a chosen few artists, but a necessary part of living” (pp. 17-18).

Drew's proposed notion is actually not that radical in Cape Breton. Many of the people in my interviews assumed musicianship was a large part of anyone’s life on the island. This was evidenced with comments like "we have a disproportionate amount of talented musicians here," "I think everyone here knows how to play something," and "you throw a rock here, you're going to hit a musician." Despite the lack of radicalism, however, Drew’s study demonstrates a clear division between amateurs and dilettantes. Many—including some of my interviewees—classify karaoke as dilettantism due to the supposed lack of dedication it takes to participate compared to amateur and professional musicians. Theoretically, one does not “practice” karaoke, they merely get up and do it.

This does not capture what Wayne Booth (1999) describes as “amateuring.” Booth describes amateurism as a disciplined and dedicated approach to music: “the amateur works at it, or at least has done so in the past, aspiring to some level of competence or mastery” (p. 12). The people who I describe as amateurs in CBLocals actually do cross the realm of professionalism at
various points by being paid for some shows; in no small part because their amateuring has led them to play consistently enough to be grouped with professionals.

Neither the amateur nor professional can completely remove themselves from monetary factors. For example, the most common musical instrument used among CBLocals participants is a guitar. One must have the funds to acquire a guitar and to perform basic upkeep (such as new strings). If they choose to play electric, they must purchase an amplifier and be aware that this may need repair or replacement at some point as well. If someone decides to devote enough time to music, these costs add up. There are few musicians removed from economics, regardless of amateur or professional status. This conversation with a young guitarist is one example:

Bryce: Did it cost you a lot to be a musician in terms of purchasing instruments, things of that nature?

Interviewee: At first it didn’t but as, y’know, you know, you want to get better gear to sound better and it’s cost me quite a few thousand bucks over the last few years. To get that kinda gear, to sound better. But I think every musician goes through that. To get better gear. You wanna sound better.

Bryce: But a lot of people can’t afford to buy the best guitar in the world.

Interviewee: True enough (laughs). I still can’t afford to buy the best guitar in the world…I think about it with good sounding gear so that people can hear (a song) the way I want to be heard, I guess.

Stebbins in 1977 coined the term “modern amateurism” to describe the phenomenon of what “was once considered play activity…evolving quietly, inevitably and unnoticeably into a new form” (p. 582). Music has long since ceased to be only play activity. Musicians have been performing for currency for as long as there have been systems of economics. However, the
folklore term of authenticity stresses a tremendous emphasis on elevating art over commerce. The “modern amateur” has made a conscious decision to identify as a musician, to “identify with it to a degree sufficient to spark an attempt to meet (professional) standards” (p. 583).

I find Stebbins’ definition to be useful though in need of clarification. He imagines “professional standards” as compelling the amateur to devote serious time to the pursuit: “(the part time participant is compelled) toward necessity, obligation, seriousness, and commitment, as expressed in regimentation (e.g. rehearsals, practice) and systemization (e.g schedules, organization)” (p. 583). This helps to communicate that the amateur devotes more time to music and identifies with it more than a dilettante.

Yet it fails to communicate the wide range of standards to which musicians hold themselves, particularly due to the subjective nature of musical evaluation. For example, over the course of several games, a professional golfer might prove his or her worth over the amateur by replicating lower scores. However, not all musicians and music listeners value such technical proficiency. Again, I return to the example of The Ramones, whose music is held in high esteem by many professionals and amateurs. This is despite the fact that many amateur musicians were and are capable of playing more diverse and complex pieces of music than The Ramones were.

Hence I clarify that “professional standards” should not be confused with “technical standards.” They are one and the same for some but not for all. For some, the “professional standard” is any music for which they believe people will pay. They feel it has more to do with writing and/or replicating a harmonious song than it does with playing music with various tempos, arrangements and complication. One musician told me that “99% of music is songwriting.” The amateur, in this idealization, envisions him or herself playing music that can be popular even if they do not dedicate themselves professionally to selling it.
For others, technically proficient musicians are held in higher esteem than musicians who have simply proven themselves professionals. For example, The Trews are an Atlantic-Canadian band whose albums “House of Ill Fame” and “Den of Thieves” garnered national radio airplay. As such, the band was viewed as an industry success. However, most people I knew or spoke with that summer did not hold the Trews in a high regard musically. Their songs were considered formulaic and overproduced. One interviewee shared a stage with the band and was unimpressed:

(My band) played a show with the Trews a few weeks ago and we go backstage and laugh about how full of themselves and ridiculous they are. Because they’re just playin’ some tunes. And it’s real easy and any moron could do it after a year of lessons or whatever. Especially what they’re doing.

This person despised the Trews’ “rock star” attitude, particularly in light of how “any moron” could play their music. This particular musician was held in high regard for an ability to play complex arrangements on many instruments. Later discourse revealed this musician did not weigh economic success in evaluating neighboring musicians:

Jerry Holland lives around the corner from me. He’s considered one of the greatest Celtic fiddlers in the world. Jennifer Roland, who’s like a crazy big fiddler, who’s huge in Europe, just moved in literally across the street…and they live in shitty little houses just like mine and they’re totally world-class musicians, but we have so many of them, we take it for granted.

Hence professional standards are not always associated with professional outcomes, although this person does cite Roland’s European following as evidence of her “world-class” musicianship. Roland and Holland’s abilities reflect the work of professionals regardless of
record sales, whereas the Trews were an industry success but actually demonstrated little beyond what the interviewee believed a supposed dilettante could achieve.

The amateur-professional paradigm not only applies to the musicians specifically but to events in general. “Professional” is used as an adjective to describe events that conform to certain organizational expectations. If one pays to attend a professional music show, for example, there are expectations of what will come with that attendance money. Some elements of the CBLocals scene are “amateurish” in nature. Set times are flexible and cancellations occur more often than I would expect for an event in other cities I have lived in or visited. For example, I witnessed one Bunker's show end prematurely even though a local band, all members present, was due to perform the closing set. Since there were so few people at the bar at that point, the show organizer decided not to continue with the show. In a more professional environment, this likely would not have occurred as the few remaining audience members would have complained and/or demanded partial or full refunds. However, when the show abruptly ended, there was little surprise among the few patrons. Yet one person did complain to me that it was a “shitshow,” implying that it lent less credence to the event as compared to a more professional outing.

Credibility issues remained significant within the scene. As we will see later in this chapter, some of the people interviewed felt that the CBLocals scene was weaker for not having some foundation of economic capital underwriting it. In thinking on issues of professionalism, the work of rhetoricians John Dewey and Walter Lippmann provide a useful frame for understanding its benefits and consequences.
Dewey vs. Lippmann

Dewey and Lippmann were not directly addressing each other when opining about professionalism, but their views are often pitted against each other. They were writing about public affairs, I am writing about music. Their debate is nevertheless useful as it frames the important question of whether or not professionalism is a necessary incentive for benefitting from any activity, music included. Lippmann’s opinion is broadly defined as defending professionalism as a motivating factor for attracting the best people for any given activity, therefore enhancing the results. Dewey does not dismiss professionalism but prioritizes accessibility, arguing that a thriving society depends on the widest number of people being able to take part in an activity.

Lippmann (1955) defends professionalism within public affairs. He puts forth that the general tasks of governance in society are best left to “experts.” The public as a whole is not fit to handle tasks that require specialization. He advocates democracy but also the role of professionals in government. He writes “the public interest may be presumed to be what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, acted disinterestedly, and benevolently” (p. 42). However, due to the fact that they do not specialize in knowledge of any of the areas of governance— economics, military, social programs— he argues they would ultimately be self-defeating if they did not allow a high amount of consultation with professionals to take precedence in governance.

The music industry adopted a Lippmann-esque call for sustained professionalism in the face of a new threat in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The popularity of new computer software applications, such as Napster and KaZaa, threatened record company profits. The programs allowed computer users to make CD quality copies of music and share the copied files with an
international network. The file-sharing phenomenon coincided with a massive slump in music sales worldwide (Graham et. al. 2003). Various music industry groups responded with publicity campaigns discouraging file sharing. One group known as the Canadian Value of Music Coalition launched a website and campaign entitled “Keep Music Coming” in 2003 (Robertson, 2003). Television ads accompanying the campaign bore the slogan: “You need music. Music needs you. Buying music helps make more music.”

The implication was that capital exchange was essential to creation: If more people buy more music, the advertisement implied, than more artists and people funding artists have money to record more. Furthermore, the possibility of making money will make more people likely to write, produce, perform and create. This argument can be summarized thus: "professionalization of music is for the betterment of music. Remove the industry, remove the music."

A vocal contingent of musicians remains that base at least part of their philosophy on the idea that the professionalization of music is necessary. Metallica is arguably the most famous group to argue against file sharing. Frontman James Hetfield proclaimed in one interview “I can’t feed my family with satisfaction” and asked downloaders why they did not “live in Canada or some other socialist country?” (PR Newswire, 2001). KISS bassist Gene Simmons’ comments reflect an association of musical production with capital incentive: “There is nothing in me that wants to go in there and do new music. How are you going to deliver it? How are you going to get paid for it if people can just get it for free?” (Bruno, 2007). At no point does Simmons suggest that he can record new music without a defined profit motive.

These are more strident samplings of anti-file sharing sentiment that can also be found from artists and industry organizations such as the Recording Industry Association of America.
(www.riaa.org) and Broadcast Music, Inc. (www.bmi.com). These arguments are not to be confused with those who specifically advocate protecting the industry for the industry’s sake. A simple economic advocacy for buying music to keep people at record companies and in record stores working is an entirely different matter than the “buying music helps make music” suggestion. These groups and certain musicians obviously have a vested financial interest in espousing professionalism in music. Yet they employ a logic designed to suggest that *music itself* is reliant upon professionalism: The production of *new* music would dry up without means to financially support it. In other words, amateurs might play and enjoy music but only professionals devote enough time to music to set the proper standards.

It is notable that Metallica's Hetfield casually tossed Canada into conversation as a "communist" alternative to the capitalist structure that he desires. The music industry has faced a much more uphill battle against file sharing in Canada than in the United States. Author Christopher Walsh wrote in 2004, “Germany, Denmark and the United States have been the latest in pushing for laws and lawsuits (on file sharing). All have been successful, but recent attempts in Canada have been failures.” In 2005, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development claimed that Canadians illegally downloaded music files at a higher rate per capita than anywhere in the world. Hence the Canadian government was a particularly salient target for critics that charged that file sharing threatened the professional model of music.

Hetfield, Simmons, the RIAA and a host of other musicians raise concerns with how impractical making music would be with lowered profits. Yet the access and capabilities once only yielded to the professionals in music now increase accessibility to the point where some argue a large amount of capital is no longer needed to record quality music. People are able to construct home recording studios with less money, people can share their recordings online and
more people are participating in the “mashup” phenomenon which requires editing skills and no musical instruments. Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson (2004) claim in this new environment, “a lively scenelike exchange among fans can flourish” (p. 6). It theoretically increases the number of people who can “enter the arena” of distributing music although this theory has yet to be demonstrated in any quantitative studies.

This newfound accessibility has become a part of the consciousness of how the press treats media industries. In the press' coverage of music, this is embodied by SPIN’s treatise on “everyone” being the “Artist of the Year” in 2006 (Browne, 2007). It becomes difficult now to discern between professionals and amateurs as many musicians encourage different levels of monetary investment in their music. It is now common practice for artists to provide free music on their websites. This has even extended to artists releasing entire full-length recordings for free download or preview (Ingram, 2007). Home recording has become common place with the advent of software and home studio tools (Anderman, 2006).

This vision of music corresponds with Dewey’s (1946) vision of governance, more specifically how the press treated political matters. Dewey’s vision of professionalism was a more integrated one than Lippmann’s. He argued that a thriving democracy needed citizens with maximum access to information, rather than simply relying on professional intervention with minimum public input. His line of argumentation is found in discussions on music. Dewey’s approach to the press shares some of the demystification rhetoric behind the Do It Yourself (D.I.Y.) ethos celebrated by punk musicians. Whereas Dewey claimed if everyone could not know it, it was not knowledge; punks suggested that if everyone cannot do it, it’s not rock and roll. Accessibility is a major pillar of the D.I.Y. mentality, specifically among punk musicians and organizers, the influence of which is seen in many CBLocals bands.
Within the CBLocals scene, there are differing levels of advocacy for more professionalization within the community. Some believe that a hierarchy of performers and venues benefits the scene, providing goals and ample rewards for musicians. The most visible example are those defending the HOR for playing shows at Smooth Herman's and Daniel's. Even though these shows do not cater to the scene, the defenders argue, they are high paying local shows to which the best musicians should aspire. Others argue for a “demystification” of music. Some of these participants believe that setting professional goals is not in the best interests of the music. For example, they see the Herman's and Daniel's shows as detracting from the overall sense of community that comes with prioritizing smaller bar shows. AA critics argue that catering to the popular for the sake of professional aspirations is detrimental to good art.

However, the situation is further complicated by the regional and national contexts. It is important to also contextualize how one can make the leap from amateur to professional producing music in Nova Scotia specifically and Canada generally. While Canadian musicians and critics often hold the American music industry up as a point of comparison, the two countries have facilitated the production of music in different fashions in the past 30 years. Both the Canadian and Nova Scotia governments play a role in assisting various musicians in the production of musical products.

Canada vs. the U.S.: Protectionism and the Funding of Music

The federal government plays a significant role in the profession of music in Canada. It has perceived a continued encroachment on the Canadian market from American media interests. Conversely, the United States federal government does little to intervene in popular music on a capital level although on policy level, it has its effects.
Michael Hummel (2007) argues that from a political perspective, there is a “history of suspicion of the creative arts in America” (p. 4). He traces this history to the “enlightened rationalism” of the country’s founders. Analyzing more recent history, he cites the Reagan administration’s “deliberate politicization of art” with Reagan’s insistence that artists (musical or otherwise) “go out and test the magic of the marketplace” (p. 5). Moving forward, American politicians commonly choose to eschew “cultural policy,” associating it with an anti-capitalist perspective that discourages the free market from deciding what art will be more prominent than others. Therefore it is no surprise that America provides very little in funding for the arts per capita in comparison to European counterparts (Yudice, 1999).

Canada is closer to the European model in terms of how it supports art in general and music specifically. The Broadcasting Act of 1991 declared “the Canadian broadcasting system must be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians. This safeguards, enriches and strengthens the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada.” The number-one threat to “the fabric of Canada” has long been perceived as the United States. Hence, Canadian Content regulations have their roots in countering a perceived excess of American content on Canadian airwaves, depriving Canadian musicians of opportunities of success (Frum & Maitland, 1976).

The Canadian music industry, and entertainment industry as a whole, has historically been surrounded by the discussion of protectionism. It is important to be more specific in terms of stating where CBLocals is positioned in this argument. It is clearly defined as an English-Canadian website for an English-Canadian scene. With the exception of a rare number of posters, the board features almost exclusively Anglophone contribution. Frank E. Manning (1994) posits English Canadian culture as “counter-hegemony,” borrowing from American
culture and then “refashioning” it into a Canadian equivalent. Thus English Canada, he argues, is constantly on the cultural “defense.”

American media is almost as readily available throughout Canada as it is anywhere in the United States. For example, the popular songs that I had heard on commercial radio in the United States from Justin Timberlake, Jay-Z and Beyonce were as much a part of the rotation in Cape Breton bars like Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s as they would be in any American bar. However, mixed in were unique Atlantic Canadian contributions such as Slowcoaster and the celebrated “Mull River Shuffle” from traditional group the Rankin Family.

Canadian popular culture reflects a push-pull between the saturation of American culture and Canadians’ desires to assert their own identity. Larry Etling (2002) cites the popular 2000 television advertisement for Molson Canadian beer, “The Rant,” as emblematic of Canada’s fear of losing its identity to the American juggernaut. He specifically notes the ad’s coinciding with a federal government finding of overwhelming predominance of American media in magazine, CD and movie sales in Canada. In the ad, a mild-mannered man stands before a screen gradually working towards a fever pitch describing traits that he feels distinguishes Canadians from Americans. Some of these comment on greater political tendencies (“I believe in peacekeeping, not policing”) whereas others focus on minutiae (“it is pronounced ‘zed!’ Not ‘zee,’ ‘zed!’”). It concludes with the man proudly declaring “My name is Joe and I am Canadian!”

The advertisement relies heavily on semiotic recognition as a mechanism for patriotism. For example, Canada and the United States may be similar, but only Canada sees “the beaver as a truly proud and noble creature” and calls a couch a “chesterfield.” Ryan Edwardson (2003) sees similar semiotic expression in bands that are identified as quintessentially Canadian. He argues the key to identity in modern rock aesthetic is in semiotic recognition: “knowing that a
band is Canadian through semiotic recognition of signs and signifiers associated with the nation” (p. 349). American rock and pop have long represented “Americana” to the point that the term itself is ascribed to mainstream artists like Bruce Springsteen and lesser-knowns such as Black Rebel Motorcycle Club.

It is difficult to pin this effect down with popular artists such as Nickelback, Avril Lavigne or Alexisonfire who have no sounds or lyrics that identify them as distinctly Canadian. Conversely, The Tragically Hip, Bruce Cockburn and Blue Rodeo reflect “Canadiana.” Each has a variety of songs expounding on Canadian locales and events. David J. Jackson (2005) argues Blue Rodeo’s songs “tell Canadian stories, utilize Canadian images and places...they enhance the vocabulary available for use by English-speaking Canadians when they think about what it means to be Canadian” (p. 38).

However, semiotic expression as a means of patriotism is not the only response to American influence. Etling argues that positive response to the advertisement (and outpouring of patriotism) reflects the desire for Canadians to maintain an identity unique from their American counterparts. The Canadian Heritage Minister at the time of the ad, Sheila Copps, cited this desire as impetus for the government’s mission to “(Canadianize) the economy and creating a national culture” (Copps, 2000). The Liberal government of the time continued to pursue a mandate of regulation of media industry that is a combination of a European model and a counter to pervasive American content.

The sustained careers of acts such as Blue Rodeo and Bruce Cockburn have been accompanied by varying reliance on Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent on Records (FACTOR) money or Canadian content (CANCON) regulation-motivated airplay. Initially, the largest concern in the development of CRTC policy was not about the music industry but rather
film and television (Audley, 1983). However, over time, music became a greater part of the government’s overall mission to assist the development of Canadian art. This comes both in the forms of financial support and broadcast policy intervention to assist Canadian efforts in the marketplace. FACTOR manages federal funds to support the production of records and videos for Canadian artists. Canadian radio stations are required to meet standards of 35 percent “Canadian content” as per the 1998 Commercial Radio Policy (O’Neill, 2006). The “MAPL” standard determines Canadian content:

- **M** (music) -- the music is composed entirely by a Canadian.
- **A** (artist) -- the music is, or the lyrics are, performed principally by a Canadian.
- **P** (production) -- the musical selection consists of a live performance that is
  1. recorded wholly in Canada, or
  2. performed wholly in Canada and broadcast live in Canada.
- **L** (lyrics) -- the lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian

(CRTC website, 2001).

The media focused renewed attention on these policies in 1992 when Bryan Adams, a world-recognized rock musician, criticized the CRTC for its intervention. Specifically, he took umbrage with the fact that his record was not deemed “Canadian content” by the MAPL rules. In 1992 (in Sydney), he described regulations as “breeding mediocrity” as they created the impression that Canadian musicians could not receive airplay on their own merits (1st Edition, 1992). Others disagreed and saw these regulations as part of an ongoing struggle to not only counteract pervasive American influences over the airwaves, but to counteract the concept that global comparison was a necessary ideal. Musician Kim Deschamps described his perspective of the post-1970s effects of CANCON regulations:
There was no industry here…(Canadians) followed the (Gordon) Lightfoot example: release in the U.S., become a force down there, and then the Canadian public will take you seriously. That's less the case now...Younger people I talk to...(are) really encouraged by the fact that bands like Blue Rodeo can have a career in Canada and don't need an American career to make a living to produce work they're happy with and to keep going year after year (Barclay, Jack & Schneider, 2001, p. 27).

In this case, both Adams and Deschamps argued from a professional perspective. Adams adopted the viewpoint that the global marketplace was the most important priority for professionals whereas Deschamps argued for an economic model that focused on prosperity within the nation’s structure. Adams referred to artists that “couldn’t get arrested” outside of Canada as though international recognition was the biggest marker of success. Deschamps challenged this assumption, arguing for the importance of sustaining a career over notoriety or records sold.

Canadian cultural policy was not merely a matter of assisting Canadians in their pursuit of the music profession. Historically, much of Canada’s content policy emerged in the 1960s and 1970s amidst growing federal government concern of the province of Quebec separating. Whereas Quebecers advocated the acknowledgement of the distinction of Quebec culture from a national culture, the federal government sought to develop the idea of a Canadian culture distinct from the rest of the world. In the 2000s, this policy has reaped some benefits through FACTOR money if not radio airplay. Canadian bands such as Arcade Fire, Feist, Broken Social Scene and The Constantines benefited little from the CANCON regulations but utilized FACTOR grants to help with their recordings. They are all part of a block of bands from Canada that comprise an
“indie Canada” movement of small-label bands who are reaching international popularity without conventional American major label intervention (Rayner, 2006).

While national grant money has been utilized by “indie-rock” bands from Canada, provincial funding in Cape Breton is provided for primarily Celtic events. The 2006 Nova Scotia provincial election resulted in Cape Bretoner Rodney MacDonald retaining the title of premier. He is a fiddler and a former Tourism and Culture Minister. In particular, the *Celtic Colours* festival continues to produce millions of dollars of revenue annually with provincial assistance. Some acts associated with CBLocals also rely on provincial funding to assist with recording. In 2006, promotion company HOR was most notably associated with this practice as they worked towards procuring grant money for Slowcoaster, Tom Fun Orchestra and Carmen Townsend to record in the future. As of this writing, each act has completed these sessions with the former two acts releasing their CDs. The studio sessions, ironically, occurred not in Canada but in Connecticut. These acts have also branched out to play at provincially sponsored *Celtic Colours* events.

Whereas provincial funding has helped bands with recording and organizers of *Celtic Colours*, municipal funding has been prevalent in the staging of CBLocals AA events. Promoter Joe Costello combined Cape Breton Regional Municipality money with sponsorship to offer a free show during East Coast Music Award weekend in 2005. A group of promoters utilized municipal money to help stage a tenth anniversary show for the CBLocals website in 2007. Municipal funding has also played a significant role in the annual Thanksgiving festival *Gobblefest*.

While these models of national, provincial and municipal funding musicians separate Canada from the United States, there are similarities found in various parts of Europe. In their
analysis of Manchester and Sheffield music communities, Adam Brown, Justin O'Connor and Sara Cohen remark (2000), local authorities are often keen on supporting local music industries because they are more cost-friendly than film and "more emblematic of the locality than other cultural production" (p. 447). The local "success story" in music is more likely to reach beyond that locality and support tourism and in-migration. They identify the support of musicians as part of an economic development strategy. This creates debate between those that argue that such support helps artists achieve tangible goals (recording, touring) and those that claim that producing music is already accessible. The latter, Brown et. al write, claim that the authorities would do best to help heighten this accessibility with "non cultural" initiatives such as improving public transit and "flexible planning or license registrations" (p. 447).

These latter qualifications were seen to be missing in CBLocals, according to most of my interviewees. They lamented what they saw as the poor public transportation in the area (particularly irksome in a gathering of sprawled areas forming one municipality), lack of shops for music and art and a lack of gathering places for the community, such as local coffee shops or jam spaces.

Toby Miller (2004) cites the example of New York City as one reason why many American government officials may be reluctant to support cultural initiatives. He argues that the influx of arts organizations and businesses in the city caused resentment among natives and also caused rent prices to rise to such a degree that the very artists who made the city a hotbed of activity could no longer afford to live there. Miller also makes the case that while the impetus of supporting creative industries seems admirable at first blush, it also reinscribes class differences:

Harnessing the skills of the population is meant to replace lost agricultural and manufacturing employment with creative sector employment. Creativity is also
seen as a social policy answer to the dislocation caused by deindustrialization; in other words, we’ll fix the poverty and collective distress caused by closing coal mines by setting up museums that detail what life was like in those coal mines; or, we’ll establish a slavery tourism trail that will provide jobs for poor whites and blacks by attracting affluent blacks to visit their heritage (p. 60).

In an American context, supporting creative industries financially is not taken as a matter of course. The aforementioned politicization of funding for the arts created conservative opposition to the concept and analyses such as those cited by Miller focus largely on economic results. However, while there are differing levels of funding in each nation and in each nation's areas, there is still a significant amount of politicization of support for the arts in Canadian contexts. This is demonstrated by an analysis of how amateurism and professionalism operates in the CBLocals scene.

**AMATEURISM AND PROFESSIONALISM IN CBLOCALS**

There are three key points that we can glean from the aforementioned literature that shape our understanding of how musicians negotiate their status within the CBLocals community. First, most of the musicians in CBLocals do not view themselves as dilettantes nor do those on CBLocals view them in this way. Second, the concept of “professional standards” should not be confused with “technical standards,” though the two are closely related. Finally, those CBLocals participants who negotiate forms of professional status as musicians do so in an environment in which both national and provincial government involvement strongly shapes musical culture.

One important distinction drawn from the literature on amateurism and professionalism is that CBLocals musicians do not fit the category of dilettantes. The vast majority of artists posted on the events page make frequent appearances at a variety of public events. Each one invests in
the role of a musician. The research in this chapter reveals differing levels of strength in this identification. There is no evidence to suggest that the CBLocals participants agree on what separates amateurs and professionals (or that they would even use those terms). Yet this chapter reveals that differing identifications creates complicated crossroads for performers.

I re-clarify a difference between professional and technical standards, but point out that the two are not too far apart. As this chapter outlines, some interviewees explore an association between professionalization and being able to develop noteworthy technical standards. However, the indie-rock aesthetic also eschews some of the qualities associated with professionals: rigid structure, cleaner sounds and allowing the market rather than specific musical interests to dictate where and what one plays.

The variety of threads and discussions I cite in this chapter reveal that some will sacrifice certain ideals they might hold as an amateur to become a professional. I encountered very few people who enjoyed the idea of playing at Smooth Herman’s for community or social merits yet some acknowledged that it carried the benefits of professionalism they enjoyed (better sound, larger audience). They may not enjoy Herman’s as much as Bunker’s but they are willing to play this venue as part of their job.

The government’s role in the music scene also provides a contrast from other music scene studies, specifically those of most American music scenes. Of the people I interviewed, various people had differing levels of involvement. HOR bands were setting up recording sessions based on provincial grants. Joe Costello was occasionally drawing upon municipal money to help stage events. Start the Show promotions staged the most AA shows during the summer and designated its funds for a future recording project. Most bands were simply playing shows and
drawing whatever money might be paid to them via a promoter or bar. The payment or non-payment of bands occasionally leads to contentious discussion on the CBLocals messageboard.

In my analyses, I focus on two broad discussions as well as two specific messageboard threads that reveal issues of amateurism and professionalism. I discuss the differing approaches between those who attempt to make a living at music as opposed to those doing it “just for fun,” the various philosophies on government involvement as well as threads on the subjects of the CBLocals aesthetic and the Aselin Debison band.

“Fun=Awesome; Art=Dumb”

I’d like the money of a bar show and the atmosphere of an AA show.

- A young musician describes the "ideal show."

On July 1, 2006 (Canada Day), Rock Ranger frontman Jay Smith and Allison Saunders were married. After the wedding, the reception was held at St. Theresa’s Parish hall, the home of many Gobblefests, Stoked For the Holidays and other CBLocals shows. Many of the same people who had lined this same hall in t-shirts and jeans to check out punk rock bands were dressed in suits and dresses to celebrate the event. Almost everyone at the wedding reception between the ages of 20 and 40 years old returned to the Saunders’ family household, where many a CBLocals band had played an impromptu set in the basement for an afterparty in years past. On this night, the groom set up to play with a number of his friends, including Sean MacGillvary, Slowcoaster’s Steve MacDougall and Gordie Sampson. Various people (in various states of sobriety and inebriation) stood up to the microphone at various times to belt out a number of their favorite songs, some local and some not. The groom returned from the basement to the Saunders’ porch to see sunlight after having descended before midnight.
Due to “musicking’s” role in facilitating social interaction, it comes as no surprise that many participants could fondly recall similar parties and social gatherings in which musicians played music with no regard for financial capital. Anecdotes from CBLocals participants about Cape Breton being an atypically musical place are a testament to that. I did my fieldwork during the summer and while I was attending as many shows as I could to buffer my observations, many times I was missing out on the interaction between CBLocals participants at parties and campfires where guitars were bandied about and people enjoyed playing whatever tunes they wished to play.

Hence house parties, campfires and so forth have cultural capital among CBLocals participants as areas where music is strictly for leisure. However, these events are not thought of as “shows.” The crossroads between amateur and professional approaches occurs when people call what they are doing a “show” and especially if they attach a dollar figure to it. Not every show location is a typical venue associated with a formal event. In the formative days of the scene, someone’s house was often the starting point for a show. As the scene became more “organized,” more and more AA venues—church halls mostly—emerged and more bars became willing to host live original music. These venues are expected to host people who identify as musicians, who are not “screwing around” and want to put on an organized entertainment event for spectators.

Nevertheless, not all of the identified musicians held the same professional aspirations. I interviewed several musicians that openly admitted to having no aspirations to a future career in music. Some of these musicians acknowledged deficiencies in their musical ability. They also acknowledged their lack of popularity. They did not outwardly worry about this, carrying the attitude that they enjoyed performing for its own sake. They readily believed that they were low
on the CBLocals “totem pole” and they were fine with that, as demonstrated by this variety of scene participants:

- I wanted to screw around, still do. I like to make sound. I have no aspirations.
- I play just for fun. Playing in a band’s fun...before, the instrument was your vehicle to be in a band. But now I find, I get something out of it, it’s just playing.
- I’ve played in some shitty bands...everyone wants different things for the scene, everyone has their own ideas of where it should go and what should happen. And a lot of times, the ideals that brought this whole scene along kinda get forgotten...I just sit back and take it for what it is: a bunch of teens and twenty-somethings in a shit town in the middle of nowhere just trying to have some fun and make something out of what a wretched existence it is in some ways...maybe that’s just the hippie in me talking (laughs).
- When we play, no one watches us. There’s, like, five people that watch us and they really like us...that’s fine. I have a lot of fun playing. Not a lot of people like what we play...but these people like it and it’s my friends playing. And I don’t care if the music’s good. I think it’s good, I know it’s not technically good at all.

These musicians had accepted life would likely take them into different career paths, but felt they would continue to pursue their music as a recreational activity. They did not express active opposition to making it a profession but harbored no serious aspirations towards it.

CBLocals user JamesFW started a CBLocals messageboard thread on April 9, 2006 titled “Fun=Awesome; Art=Dumb.” He asked “does anyone else here play in a band purely for fun? You know, not for money, or artistic integrity, or some other reason, but just for fun?” While the
thread quickly turned into a series of jokes and arguments not addressing the original question, JamesFW presented the argument that neither music nor money has to be the largest priority.

This attitude was different from musicians who adopted an amateur approach but still indicated a serious dedication to their art. One member of a nationally reviewed band wanted the band to record and play shows with financial support, but did not want it to be the main line of income for the members. The musician argued it would compromise interest in the music and even lead to a forced relocation, citing the example of nationally popular artist Joel Plaskett:

Interviewee: Joel Plaskett wants to live in Halifax for the rest of his life. I’ve had this discussion with him. He does not want to live in Toronto but if he wants to continue to make money and make records, he has to live in Toronto. Warner Records says so. I don’t ever want anyone to have that much control over me. I mean, if it’s your job, then it’s different. But we don’t want it to be our job.

Bryce: So you don’t see making a living out of it…because it would suck the fun of it?

Interviewee: Yes.

This person stressed the importance of having autonomy over any artistic initiative: the thought of a major label taking control of the band's work was irritating. Any level of control from an outsider over the music yielded to the professional process would make music a “job” and therefore not fun anymore. Plaskett visited Sydney in the summer of 2006 at the peak of his popularity. His national hit song “Go Nowhere With You” was all over the radio. However, this musician overlooked Plaskett's increased audiences and financial success and focused on his enforced move away from his home because of the demands that professionalizing his music had created.
A rare few were open to pursuing music as a professional endeavor but viewed it separate from their artistic endeavors. In other words, they felt alienated from the professionalization of music but were still willing to make a living at it, while playing the music they actually liked on the side. This was expressed in a willingness to pursue a job as a session musician, even though most in the scene would not consider this option:

Interviewee: Ideally, I want to be a session musician.

Bryce: Is that something any of your friends have in common?

Interviewee: Not really, no.

Bryce: Why do you think you’re in the minority?

Interviewee: I don’t think a lot of the people that I know would have the dedication to do something like that. I know Dylan (Mombourquette) would like to try to be a session drummer or something along those lines…I don’t think “the session musician” is a thing that a lot of people are aware of.

On the other hand, other musicians in the scene had no qualms about their ambitions and made no distinction between creative endeavors and professional aspirations. These people tended to describe their enjoyment of an event in direct relation to the level of professionalism they associated with it. Even among some of these people, however, I found a certain amount of alienation from the "job" of performing music. One singer/songwriter recalled the eagerness in attending shows as a teenager. Adulthood was a much different story:

When I was a kid, I would go to shows no matter how shitty the bands were.

Now, I barely go to shows even if I like the band that's playing because I'm so apathetic to life in general (laughs). If I have to pay cover, it's a serious burden!:

"What? I'm not in this band? No way!" (laughs)
The people that I interviewed that made no distinction between their art and their professional aspirations with music were not heavily involved in the AA scene. I heard the frustration of one person who found themselves playing fewer and fewer AA shows. The frustration stemmed from the perspective that CBLocals AA promoters did not prioritize the musicians’ financial interests before others. This was so much so, claimed the interviewee, that musicians were actually surprised to get paid for AA shows:

The more I go away, the more I realize it’s unique to Cape Breton…I spent the first 10 years I was playing music, uh, playing for free…it was completely acceptable for the promoter to take the money, pay the one away band and then bank it and say “oh, but I’m gonna put that towards my next show”…I know firsthand from dealing with sketchy people that I played tons of shows that have made lots of money and no one saw any of it…you blow (a band’s) mind if you even give them $50.

I was not surprised this person was interested in the welfare of bands and disinterested in participating in exploitation. What was additionally interesting, however, was this same person's correlation between professional shows and legitimacy. Monetary gains provided a simple means of explaining the value of the music to those outside the culture. Outsiders saw only a lack of financial capital. Even playing shows for one’s friends came with financial considerations— travel, replacement of instrument parts. The same musician found it especially frustrating as a teenager beholden to guardians:

It really made it hard to legitimize the whole thing in the eyes of my folks, that I was taking the car every weekend and driving to Glace Bay or Sydney or New Waterford or the Pier and playing these shows in these halls. And showing my
parents these pictures and saying “look, there’s 300 kids there!” And they’re like, “well, why did you ask me for gas money?” “Well, we didn’t get paid.” “What the fuck?”

This skeptic, as well as the aforementioned jaded former attendee, migrated more towards the “bar scene” as it offered more consistent paying shows. This ranged from shows in popular bars (Smooth Herman's, Daniel's) to the more CBLocals-friendly venues of Bunker's, the Maple Leaf and the Upstairs. AA shows were a potential financial liability compared to the low-risk investment in bar shows. A former promoter within the scene provided a simple mathematic explanation that could apply to any area where a “wet/dry” venue is not available for both drinking and non-drinking patrons. Since a bar derives its revenue from drink money, its low-attendance show still offered less risk than the AA show requiring rental fees ranging anywhere from $150-400:

If you can’t make that money back on a show, you owe them. You’re in debt. So if you feel like you don’t have control over that, then you’re going to go to an alternative that’s cheaper and more viable and that’s bars. I mean, I can do a bar show for nothing, I don’t have to pay the bar for anything. If 30 people show up to that bar and I charge $5 cover, the bar doesn’t get any of that money, $150 goes to the touring band.

The former promoter suggested that for anyone to stage an AA show, one had to discount the profit motive as it was highly unlikely attendance would ever justify such shows. If 30 people arrived at such a show, there might not be enough money to cover rental fees, let alone pay bands.
Joe Costello was easily one of the most recognized members of the scene not so much for his musical endeavors but for the fact that he staged at least one show a month. However, Costello held a 40 hour a week job at EDS and expressed no interest in making the title of promoter a full time job. He found himself promoting fewer bar shows despite their increased chance of profit. Costello only promoted one bar show in 2006; a Billy & the Lost Boys show to follow the band's AA performance the same day. While the bar show was on all of the posters, only a handful of paid attendees showed up. In the AA scene, Billy & the Lost Boys’ pop-punk sound (which was somewhat of a precursor to emo) did not seem out of place. At the bars, it was atypical. This was consistent with the bands Costello booked and in which he demonstrated an interest.

Costello's practices placed him on the dominated end of the Bourdieu's heteronomous principle of hierarchization, even as he maintained a dominant role based on autonomous principles. From my observations, the capital derived from his shows (no more than $8 per show, typically lower) could not have added up to half of what he could make from cover charges promoting a Smooth Herman’s show. He focused his efforts on providing venues for the bands that he and a younger audience (primarily teenagers) wanted to see; even though AA shows featuring an attendance of no more than 150 was not a profitable endeavor, especially if the promoter chose to pay travel charges for 1-3 bands travelling to perform. No AA show I observed from Joe Costello or Start the Show featured any less than two travelling acts.

On the other hand, The House of Rock (HOR) eschewed AA shows during the summer of 2006. The group aspired to develop a business model, ranging from soliciting government grants to openly courting the audiences of the popular bars. During my entire time of fieldwork in both the AA and bar scene, I spoke with owners and employees from the Maple Leaf, the Upstairs and
Bunker's. Yet the owners of the more popular bars were invisible in the scene. Even though Tom Fun Orchestra, Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger were gracing their stages, these venues did not provide any camaraderie surrounding the music. This was the sacrifice that some critics argued the HOR was making for the pursuit of professionalism.

One interviewee compared the HOR's ambitions to that of the organizers of the *Celtic Colours* festival, which had generated so much money in the local economy. Through grants, contributions and advertising, the *Colours* festival featured a board of directors and employed several people to promote and organize:

Interviewee: There is no infrastructure for (the CBLocals scene)...HOR is getting there, there's a few employees...it's not quite fully there, it's not self-sufficient, relies on more money than it can generate right now but I think it's on the way.

Bryce: What would you say are some of the biggest differences between *Celtic Colours* versus, say, HOR?

Interviewee: *Celtic Colours* is money-generating, I guess, it's not a profit business but it functions, it does what it's doing...it's real, it's legitimate. HOR is still stuck as a bit of a hobby.

These comments again associated legitimacy with professionalism. HOR was “stuck” as a hobby whereas *Celtic Colours* was "real" and "legitimate." This person went on to explain that there was likely less alienation among the Celtic performers. The advertising, grants and infrastructure ensured the musicians could worry about playing the music without concern for the organizational elements. Associating these possibly menial tasks with playing music could dull one's enthusiasm.
Other participants held more ambivalent feelings about the HOR's goals. They supported the goal of infrastructure but expressed concern that the absence of older, more established acts from the AA scene took away from the overall sense of community. They felt that an excess of shows in these locations hurt the long-term development of the scene at the expense of short-term profits. One teenager lamented an inability to watch the HOR acts that were acquiring acclaim on the website and messageboard:

I know there’s a lot of really really good bar bands that play bar shows which makes me wish I was 19 so I could go see them. Carmen Townsend, Tom Fun play a lot more bar shows. I’ve only seen videos…they seem like a lot of fun. I wish I could go to those.

This opinion was not exclusive to teenagers. Participants older than 21 also expressed concern with the long-term health of the scene due to a preoccupation with playing bar shows. They worried about the severing of ties between generations in the community, as these two people did:

- I think that the people making the music aren’t looking past the money that it’s making them. They aren’t looking at the long-term effect that it’s going to have on their careers and on the scene in general…it seems like they feel they’ve outgrown the music scene. They’re part of the music business…a point that I’ve expressed to numerous people within the HOR is that they are perceived as leaders of this music community and they should act like it. They should play the AA shows at least more than once a year. They should be there for kids to look up to them.
It's becoming about money. It's not as much about music as it used to be. People used to be happy about the opportunity to play an AA show and now no one wants to play an AA show because they know they're not going to get paid.

Critics also cited the apathy of some of the HOR's bar audiences. While Bunker’s and the Maple Leaf enjoyed a small base of patrons that appreciated the bands, Daniel’s and Herman’s drew crowds that were large—but ignored the music. During a typical night at Daniel’s, more than half the patrons either ignored the bands completely or stared somewhat resentfully at the band playing. The resentment often stemmed from the fact that the band was cutting into the dance music that played in between sets, as described in Chapter 2's Airport/Daniel's bar scenario.

The justification of booking popular bars evoked detailed arguments. Defenders of the HOR looked at the progression to regular paying shows at venues that did not necessarily cater to the CBLocals audience as a natural progression for musicians. Some cited the impracticality of the low-paying AA circuit for raising a family whereas others held to the belief that a large audience—regardless of who comprised it—was the target of almost any performer. One expatriate Cape Bretoner felt this way:

It’s a bigger place to play. I don’t know any entertainer that doesn’t want fans.

By playing at Smooth Herman’s, you get a bigger variety and more fans. That’s a good thing. You wanna be a band, right?

This was a personal subject for many people in my study, even some not directly involved in the music. Many of my interviewees were friends of some or all of the people involved in the HOR. These two people found it hard to look down upon their aspirations, even if it drove them to a bar that was not the ideal CBLocals location:
- If Herman’s is down the street and they’re offering a good night’s pay and four full hours that your band can go in and showcase their music or you can go to Bunker’s and (have to) share the stage with somebody and not have as big of a venue, not have as good of a sound system…(HOR bands have) done that. They’ve had that experience. All of them started with the AA (scene)…they’re also going to do acoustic sets at Bunker’s when they’re asked to…they’re also making a living and I feel like (resentment is) sort of like “I like my friends until they’re successful.” And I really don’t think that’s positive for the scene.

- How many years did they play tiny shows where they’d get a couple of dollars from the cover at the door that the kids paid?… they weren’t making tons of money but they weren’t in it for that…you have to be realistic and realize that those guys aren’t kids anymore. They’ve grown up, they have families, they have goals in life. And y’know, what’s wrong with making money for doing what you do?

The crowds that Bunker’s and Maple Leaf attracted were not as large and therefore there was a financial interest in appearing at Daniel’s and Smooth Herman’s. It is difficult to describe the capacities of each of the venues but all of my interviewees conceded that Daniel's, but especially Smooth Herman's, was capable of housing more spectators than Bunker's, Maple Leaf or the Upstairs ever could. "Do you know how many people over the fire code we were?," exclaimed one person in describing a show at one of the latter locations. The crowd he was describing would likely have taken up only half of Smooth Herman's fire code space. Two older participants in the scene argued that the loss of Chandler's bar had hindered the scene, as it possessed the capacity to house a larger audience without "selling out" to the dance audience:
- Right now, the scene needs a bar the size of Chandler’s that it doesn’t have. It needs a bar that will fit about 220-250 people and right now we have a couple of bars that will hold about 100 people and Daniel’s that holds about 3-400…our bars that cater to local live music are too small…and our larger bars that don’t have a history of catering to local live music, and have an established clientele that don’t support live music, are too big.

- Chandler’s was great because Chandler’s was a bigger room. What I liked about Chandler’s was…they kinda really didn’t give a shit, they were just there and you were a band playing, do what you want kinda thing…they had a pretty good attitude about it.

Most people I spoke with (on and off the record) conceded that Smooth Herman’s or Daniel’s (mostly Herman’s) were not ideal to attract a music community. Most accepted playing at these places as a part of making music an occupation. Only one person directly involved with Herman's and Daniel's shows was willing to go so far as to possibly call it “selling out”:

I think it is selling out but we’ve had great shows there and we’re treated well and they pay us well. The sound is great. And we’ve had some shows where it’s been phenomenal, people have been up front…if our first show there was horrible and kinda crushed us…then that would really be selling out (laughs)…it’s not selling out for Slowcoaster because they’re a club band…but for a rock band that wants to just play for thirty minutes, then wreck the stage? Yeah, it's selling out.

This veteran's point was that playing at Herman’s, more than being a job, now felt like a job. Initial shows were encouraging enough, but the band’s genre of music was constrained by Herman’s lengthier set requirements and more dance-oriented atmosphere. However,
Slowcoaster fit right in. So too did Tom Fun Orchestra. The more upbeat, dancey music of these bands, described in Chapter 2, likely contributed to the HOR's continued pursuit of Herman's and Daniel's shows even if others perceived it to the detriment of CBLocals-friendly bars or AA shows.

The discussions of venues and promotion within the CBLocals community were conducted in a manner that focused on the heteronomous principle of hierarchization, even if it did not necessarily correspond to the actions of the promoters. For example, striving to attain a large audience was assumed to be a goal of all promoters. The promoters themselves behaved in this fashion: posting on the messageboard to promote their shows, putting up posters on the streets (although some less than they once did, as I discuss in Chapter 4) and trying to "hype" the event within the community.

However, as many of these promoters had no vested interest in making a living at the shows, they did not necessarily need to behave as professionals. One could argue that the scene did not need a venue the size of Chandler's for any motives other than business purposes. If one enjoyed a show at the Maple Leaf, for example, then why worry about whether or not you could have drawn more people if Chandler's were around?

Bourdieu (1993) argues that there is actually significant crossover between the heteronomous and autonomous fields of artistic production. In other worlds, the principles of the autonomous field tend not to be absolute: the starving artist is not necessarily guaranteed critical acclaim solely because of their low economic status nor is a financially successful artist written off as fluff. Somewhere between the two fields, there is a balance of success and failure. The CBLocals scene in 2006 reflected the continuing negotiation of how that balance was determined. The moment that a performer took themselves away from the campfire or wedding
afterparty, the heteronomous principles of hierarchization applied to some degree in terms of how one conducted themselves. Yet it did not necessarily mean one was selling out.

**The Government’s Role in CBLocals**

We’re doomed to repeat our past which is basically a subservient and non-progressive culture and society…with the reliance on government grants and artistic grants, I see a repetition of ‘70s thinking. It goes back to the *Cape Breton Summertime Revue* and that…we didn’t start to become recognized as a scene because of the government grants we’ve gotten.

- An interviewee offers a skeptical perspective of government funding in the Cape Breton scene

On August 3, 2006, I ventured to The HOR’s official headquarters. It sat in the second level of a building on Charlotte Street. Charlotte Street was and is the central point of Sydney, especially for bar goers. Smooth Herman’s, Daniel’s, Club Capri and The Maple Leaf were all on Charlotte. Bunker’s was only one block away. The HOR location did not make itself obvious to strangers. It was a non-descript office directly above a small smoke shop that also sells band T-shirts and a select number of CDs from Maritime artists. The HOR office was a hub of activity on this day. Musicians and promoters filtered in and out to grab smokes while listening to a production in progress. The musicians in the adjacent room gently jibed at each other, listening to the mastering of a recording from non-HOR group The Lighthouse Choir. An employee handled mail and looked at a variety of schedules. A government grant had allowed this person to spend the summer doing paid work for the HOR. It was reflective of the business-meets-casual reputation of the organization. The employee had attended shows for many years before becoming involved as a HOR employee. Taking a break from a conversation
with me, and with others in the room, one musician noted the significance of this employee's
contribution: “We'd be lost without (it).”

Government programs have currently been a part of every effort within the CBLocals
community to develop music as a sustainable means of employment. There were other groups
besides the HOR utilizing provincial grants. Drowning Shakespeare used grant money to record
a CD. They toured eastern Canada during the summer of 2006 to promote their CD. Their
money came from the music business program and export development section of Music Nova
Scotia, a non-profit member services organization. Bands utilizing this assistance carried the
province’s Tourism, Culture and Heritage logo on their works, a visual reminder of the
government’s role in the process.

In Canada, the government plays a significant role in the arts. This is true in Nova Scotia
as well. This in and of itself differentiates Cape Breton contextually from the majority of its
American counterparts. It is furthermore distinct from even other areas of Canada in terms of the
populace's view of government involvement in any industry. There are a number of proponents
and critics to be found across the world for government support for industry, but Cape Breton's
recent industrial history is different from recently studied music scenes in that most of its major
industry was government supported for many decades.

Constance Deroche (2003) notes that Cape Breton’s history is underpinned by a series of
community economic development (CED) initiatives. For example, New Dawn Enterprises was
founded in 1976; “the country’s oldest not-for-profit community development corporation” (p.
226). Cape Breton University also boasts the only MBA program with a CED specialty. It is not
uncommon in Cape Breton to develop a not-for-profit organization designed to enhance the
community while providing employment. Hence, professionalism is heavily influenced by the public sector. The HOR operates on the CED model of business prevalent in the area.

Deroche notes that many public figures are displeased with this way of doing business. She argues that these “key local spokespersons” frame their portrayals of government initiatives to create the perception that Cape Breton labors under a “culture of dependency.” Current Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, made such an argument about the Maritimes in general as Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada. Critics allege this culture is manifested in three qualities: “lack of faith in self-help; an inability to cope with change, to organize effectively, and to take risks; and radically misplaced corrective strategies” (p. 228).

Deroche argues that these critics' arguments turn a situation "borne of capitalist exploitation" and government mismanagement into a "victim blaming" scenario. Furthermore, she argues that critics tend to overstate the negatives resulting from state-supported employment and fail to acknowledge the benefits of Cape Breton workers' ability to develop unions in a public, rather than private, work environment. This ultimately informs what Deroche sees as an area highly imbued with voluntary association:

organizing— for sociability, to resist private-sector exploitation, and to pressure government—is an old Cape Breton "tradition." The evidence does not readily lend itself to conclusions about a historically ravaged, dispirited, disorganized, and resigned population" (pp. 236-237).

In sum, Deroche argues that critics of public business models and government intervention in Cape Breton tend to overstate the negatives (a supposed creation of "culture of dependency") while downplaying the positives (the fostering of solidarity and community).
Deroche argues that the government intervention may have been misplaced in the past, but that critics skew this in order to argue that all publicly funded initiatives are to be disparaged.

In the "economic underdevelopment" of Cape Breton, one also sees a tension between Cape Breton citizens and the provincial government. Feelings of isolation are rooted in Cape Breton’s stormy relationship with the province. Nova Scotia was one of the original four provinces of the establishment of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 (Smith, 1987). Foreshadowing stormy future national relations, Nova Scotia’s Imperial Fisheries Commissioner, Joseph Howe opposed the province’s joining Confederation. He feared a loss of control over Nova Scotia’s bountiful resources. Nova Scotia's history with Canada was rooted in suspicion, and Cape Breton's recent relationship with the province has been the same.

The urban center of Nova Scotia is Halifax, approximately 250 miles removed from Sydney. The Halifax Regional Municipality’s population is 385,000, with the former city of Halifax host to 119,292 (Nova Scotia Statistical Review 2004). The comparatively booming population of the province’s capital is one reflection of the disparity between the two areas and a sign of Cape Breton’s struggle to maintain cultural vitality. We see this struggle in Cape Breton’s economic underdevelopment, negative stereotypes and youth exodus. These disparities between Cape Breton and Halifax lead to feelings of being “twice as isolated” as citizens feel both country and province have given them a bad deal. One skeptic quipped about Halifax band Sloan’s Twice Removed album title (which he took to mean that Haligonians feel removed from both the world and from Canada), “if (Halifax is) ‘twice removed,’ what does that make us?” This cynicism contributed to those who supported Deroche's line of thinking within the CBLocals scene. In a 2007 messageboard post, TehGreggler summarized an opinion I found in a handful of interviewees and musicians during my fieldwork in 2006:
federal funding in Cape Breton doesn’t even begin to address the historic debt the rest of Canada (in particular Upper and Lower Canada and even Britain) owe us. If you looked at how Dosco and Bosco and other Government Corporations treated this Island (oh wait, there’s that sticky tar pond issue, eh?) and the history of the labour struggle in Cape Breton: using our coal miners as indebted slaves, transporting our steel to other manufacturing points etc. And then not reinvesting into this community, its downright criminal…

So the government and corporations have exploited the land and people of Cape Breton for over two hundred years. And yet its somehow WRONG to accept their money for artistic endeavours? …does not compute.

(Posted on the CBLocals board: Tue Mar 20, 2007 1:48 pm)

This showed up in some of my interview comments. I encountered people that were bitter in how they felt the government had failed the people in the loss of coal mining jobs. Others, like Deroche, simply felt the government had taken missteps in the past that needed correcting: "In the 60s, they were investing money in Cape Breton, they were building hockey rinks everywhere. Hockey rinks don’t generate economic growth!"

Rod Gale was the most vocal opposition on the CBLocals messageboard to provincial government involvement (Gale used his actual name as his username on the CBLocals board). In fact, TehGreggler's comments came in a thread that Gale started in March 2007 titled “Fear and Loathing in Cape Breton.” In it, he argued that the music scene and Cape Breton in general needed to reduce its reliance on government funding, specifically provincial funding. He expressed no opposition to municipal funding. Several users countered Rod’s opinion by noting that government funding often allows bands to spend less time working at jobs they hate and
more time recording. The thread was eventually locked upon D-A-R-R-Y-L's suggestion that it had outlived its usefulness.

In my interviews, I found both suspicion and acceptance of government grants, although the latter was far more prevalent. A handful of people were concerned about any attempts to prioritize capital—private or public. "A lot of it is starting to become about money," said one, "and I think to the detriment of the scene." Skeptics worried that the habit of applying for grants would eventually overtake the habit of creating music. This logic rejected the state-supported model of professionalism discussed in this chapter. One person implied that musical ambition is tainted by the pursuit of state-supported professionalism:

If individuals put the money before the music… I think that leads to lack of creativity. Maybe you can get a grant for blowing your nose, right? Are you going to blow your nose? It becomes about the grant, it no longer becomes about the creativity or the art. It becomes about the grant. It becomes about ‘I gotta get this grant because I gotta pay my rent.’ It doesn’t become ‘I gotta get this grant because I gotta create music.’ That’s what I see startin’ to creep in there.

Conversely, supporters found this criticism hypercritical. One interviewee suggested he would rather have technology service-provider EDS sponsor his tour than to work for them ("getting less money…and bugging Americans during their suppertime"). The person argued that EDS was ultimately negative for the community but either way, Cape Breton was financially beholden to the organization. The musician also suggested that the government meddled less creatively than a major record label would, ergo it was less of a "sellout":

Interviewee: We were really nervous about, y’know, some invisible entity made up of some grey-bearded fellows and their cohorts…(but) with a government
grant, it’s: “Here’s the money. You tell us what you’re going to do. If you do it, we’re cool.”

Bryce: There’s a reputation that Cape Breton has of constantly subsidizing itself…

Interviewee: Instead of what? All of us working at a call center, making minimum wage so we can afford to put our records out? ‘Cause I did that and that sucks!

The interviewee did concede that not everyone within the scene wanted to make a living at music and therefore might feel differently:

I know that I can say, firsthand, that I was one of them… (working) at call centers for a month and a half. And mow lawns. And do all these crap jobs. And try to find time to jam and be so exhausted that you don’t even want to play. I’ve done that. Now, the other end of the scale is I can sometimes do stuff that isn’t my ideal music or work situation but I’m at least working towards goals I couldn’t have achieved if had just kept my music and the rest of my life completely separate.

Criticism centered on the historical context of provincial government grants in Cape Breton; associating provincial government support with the perception of “culture of dependence” in Cape Breton dating back to the 1970s. Additionally, prior to the HOR, the primary musical beneficiaries of government funding were the Celtic Colours and the Cape Breton Summertime Revues that were detached from the CBLocals scene. This increased the level of suspicion towards the government as these groups were seen as the dominant culture against which CBLocals was pitted. Support of funding focused on the belief that one inevitably...
serves one financial master or another, both of which are detrimental to the Cape Breton community in some fashion. Choosing to “serve” the one that least impinged on his or her creativity was seen as the "lesser of two evils."

These conflicting opinions reflect a contrast in views of alienation within the music scene. One feels that worrying about rent is a concern that should not touch the music of the bands playing. The other feels that working other jobs to pay rent takes time away from playing music. The former feels government grants alienate bands from the art; the latter believes they bring bands closer to their art while taking musicians away from call center jobs from which they feel exceptionally alienated.

I found interesting splinter perspectives as well. One individual supported the HOR's pursuit of government grants but speculated that the organization could make even better use of them. This person suggested that members of the band could focus on using the grants to support recordings, use their jobs to support cost of living and reduce the number of shows to avoid burning out on the music. As an audience member, the fan had experienced a "burnout" regarding one HOR artist: "I'm a huge Alicia Penney fan. 2-3 years ago? Wouldn't miss a show. Now? Don't even bother. Because I know she's going to be playing another show next week. So it's no longer a treat, no longer something special."

This argument was somewhat different from most supporters of grants that suggested money from a grant would boost a band’s chance to dedicate themselves to music and not towards their job. This person argued people should dedicate as much time to their jobs, but also to grants, to avoid audience burnout and maximize enthusiasm and "buzz" around an artist's music.
Municipal involvement was less contentious. Most people agreed that turning to members of city government for donations for shows was a good way to offset costs when staging AA events. One promoter succinctly argued "the government plays an important part in what's going on and we can't all afford to lay out rent monies and food monies to put on these kinds of shows." Most people were aware that some support was needed from local officials to offset the costs of shows involving larger touring acts. Additionally, the municipality typically provided gear that no one member of the scene would be willing to afford, as this speaker described:

Municipality recreational department (is) supportive financially and in other ways…(they have) supplied a 16 channel mixer and poweramps and speakers necessary to turn it into a vocal P.A.…(the province’s) cultural activities program would support things like Gobblefest, Stoked For the Holidays, any sort of institution for lack of a better word…(federal) HRDC has provided employment grants. I think it’s a generally neglected topic (among the attendees)…if there’s a way to keep the price low for the attendees and it involves government money, potentially only at the cost of sticking a logo on a poster?...the reality is: you need to cover your costs.

We can surmise from the efforts of popular bands within the CBLocals scene that involvement of government funding is deemed almost inevitable to pursue professional status. A cavalcade of artists such as Jedi Mind Trick, Airport, The Downfall, Canker, Athymia, and Superior Vena Cava did not receive government funding. These bands fit closer to the “amateur” side of Stebbins’ professional-amateur scale, although none publically declared an opposition to funding.
The debates on government funding and participation with local and provincial government programs differentiate CBLocals discussions on selling out from a globally understood paradigm of the subject. The invocation of selling out to “big, bad corporate interests” remained (as evidenced by the contempt for EDS and one user’s dismissal of Warner records). However, the issue of government intervention was brought up more often than corporate intervention when the issue of selling out or financial gain was attached to the scene. It was a conversation that I did not see in other scenes across North America.

**Good Sound, Pretentiousness and the “Studio Trap”**

The vast majority of events I attended for AA were held in halls but the final event I attended was part of an ongoing band contest. The events were held at Savoy Theatre in Glace Bay. I attended part of the August 2 show, primarily to see Violent Theory and Ricochet compete against a teenage band to which I had never seen reference on CBLocals, Two Sided Story. The walls were bedecked with famous traditional music performers that had visited the Savoy (Foster & Allen, Jimmy Rankin) as well as children’s performers (Eric Nagler, Fred Penner) and pop musicians (Chantal Krevaziuk). Even a much derided segment of cover bands— the “tribute artist”— occupied a spot on the Savoy wall. No one who even remotely fit the CBLocals culture was there.

Of the three, only Two Sided Story played cover songs (apparently not informed that it was “originals only” week). The largest praise bestowed on the group by a judge was that they were “radio friendly.” Another commented, “you don’t look like you were having fun.” Punk band Ricochet, adorned in black shirts and playing songs at two minutes or less, were praised for being “tight” if not diverse. “Well, that’s punk rock,” the singer said with a smile. However, Violent Theory won over the judges with a combination of an impressive light show, well-played
aggressive rock and physical enthusiasm. They were easily the most active of the bands.

“Everything is effortless,” one judge remarked, “I don’t know what you can’t do, really.”

What I took from the judges’ comments was that they admired Ricochet’s punk rock enthusiasm but wanted them to develop more polish. They liked Two Sided Story’s polish but wanted them to exude the carefree attitude seen in so many punk rock bands. Violent Theory, however, kept it “loose” enough to look like they were having fun but “tight” enough to appear as though they could do it for a living. They utilized a setlist developed through many shows played to 10-100 people with faulty PAs on floor level with the audience. At the same time, they fit right in with an impressive light show normally reserved for the well compensated musicians regularly gracing the Savoy stage. They had merged the slick sounds and sights of the contest venue with their crudely developed punk rock sound.

Michael Newman (2009) and Michael Azerrad (2001) both argue that independent cinema and music, respectively, underwent a period of fetishization of working within limited financial and technical means. Newman writes that "in many cases a low budget would itself become a discursive fetish object, a means of concretizing a nebulous aesthetic quality (honesty, truth, vision)" (p. 19).

Azerrad furthermore argues that while audiences fetishized a developing aesthetic around low financed means, so too did musicians. "The breakthrough realization that you didn’t have to be a blow-dried guitar god to be a valid rock musician ran deep" and musicians took it to heart that not only did one not have to be "blow dried " but that one should avoid doing so at all costs. "The indie underground made a modest way of life not just attractive but a downright moral imperative" (p. 6). Azerrad concurs with Newman's earlier cited conclusion that this "moral imperative" simply became a co-opted approach within the mainstream music industry, as
Nirvana ushered in a commercially successful era of under-produced, "low-fi" rock albums. Thus the indie aesthetic is much like the term "indie" in general: continually contested.

If venues, sound equipment and recording studios were considered the building blocks of a music scene, musicians built the CBLocals scene with primitive tools compared to major label contemporaries. The big stage at the Savoy Theatre was far more spacious than anywhere else I had seen a band play at an AA show. At Ed’s Indoor Play in North Sydney, the bands played in a room that would have fit a capacity of no more than 100, with no stage at all. At the Sydney River Fire Hall and St. Anne’s in Glace Bay, the promoters decided not to utilize the stages, opting instead to set the bands up on the floor. In contrast to the complex, multi-channel sound systems operated at the Savoy, these shows were usually played through four-to-sixteen channel mixers, with microphone cords that often could not hold for the duration of the show.

In the 1990s, the circulation of recorded music within the CBLocals scene took on a similar low-rent feel. Almost all of the music from local bands within the scene was circulated via 4-track recordings put onto cassette and sold for $3-5. The occasional vinyl pressing occurred, such as a 7” from Mastadon Ridge. Compilations such as Remnants (1997) and The Long Wall (1999) were among the earliest efforts to capture the sound of the scene on CD.

Many within the scene were content to continue the tradition of avoiding slick studio production. Two people during my fieldwork advertised their studio services on the messageboard and another expressed interest in finding a professional studio in Ingonish, both with little response. Bands that fell outside the HOR grouping in the bar scene likely did not have the funds to pursue studio recording and chose not to pursue those efforts at home. For example, I did not see any recordings from Joe Moroz, Alyce MacLean or Airport. The advent
of software such as ProTools suggested that home recording could achieve high quality sound. Harry Doyle chose to record in his new Sydney home with such a setup.

CBLocals messageboard user brake believed that professional studios offered music another learning experience. It was not just the process, but the studio itself, that he felt needed to be demystified. He felt that a professional studio could be as easy to navigate as home studios if the musician had a brief introductory session with the equipment. He expressed this in the “Home vs. Studio” thread:

I see tons and tons of people that are kinda.. well, afraid of the whole recording process. Big studios with lots of blinky lights, sliders, and flashing things -can- be very intimidating, but it doesn't have to be... at all...If someone took the time and explained everything that's going on, I'd bet it would be a whole lot less nerve-wracking. Learn as much as you can about the whole process, it'll be a lot less scary, and you'll be better off in the long run. you know what sound you want (hopefully), you should learn how to get it.

(Posted on the CBLocals board: Fri Jun 09, 2006 7:48 pm)

However, brake emphasized a preference for getting the right sound. Two “scene elders,” Rod Gale and D-A-R-R-Y-L, favored home recording due to what they felt was a more organic process of capturing “honest” music. This was evident in the threads about “Home Recording versus Studio Recording” and The Downfall’s release of four-track MP3s recorded in Harry Doyle’s self-constructed home studio.

I think we really need to demystify the process of recording, simplify it, bring it back to capturing noises, hisses, clicks, warts and all... just create.

…just do it, don’t feel it has to be perfect
More bedroom, basement, attic, sidewalk recordings!
Just record - just create.
The technology is their just do it. Don't get caught up in the studio trap!
(Rod Gale, posted on CBLocals board: Wed Jun 07, 2006 12:58 pm)
Neither D-A-R-R-Y-L nor Gale bothered to discuss the inherent differences in sound quality between “sidewalk” recordings and studio recordings. Their rhetoric championed the accessibility of creation. If musicians are letting a lack of a studio get in the way of creation, they argued, they should not be. However, also present in their logic was the rhetoric of a low-fidelity aesthetic present in independent rock culture. D-A-R-R-Y-L champions the “noises, hisses, clicks, warts.” Rod specifies that he wants more locations: “bedroom, basement, attic, sidewalk.” This “live-to-tape” approach is theoretically more “honest” as it captures the “warts.” However, the releasing of music in the CBLocals culture had distinctly undergone a shift in which there were fewer of these recordings.

Much of the 2006 music that I observed for sale from various artists within CBLocals culture had been recorded in professional studios. Drowning Shakespeare and Richmond Hill’s releases sounded very slick and featured little of the “hisses” and “clicks” to which MacKinnon alluded. Others were not as high on this aesthetic. The comments at the beginning of this chapter indicated a discontent with people who praised music for being “honest” rather than other issues of quality.

The home vs. studio issue was just one manifestation of the aesthetics that people championed within the scene. Aesthetics also played a role in the discussion of venues. The playing of music to non-fans was one issue, but another was the general “vibe” of each venue
regardless of the quality of sound or performance. Different people preferred different things from venues. Some stressed sound quality, others stressed the intangible quality of where they enjoyed themselves the most and others still liked a little of both. This sampling of comments reflected the mixed desires:

- I had a lot of fun in the Maple Leaf. I wouldn’t say that it was a necessarily good place to watch the show but it was just always fun. ‘Cause I remember lots of times being (on the booth side of the Maple Leaf) going “damn, I wish I could see (the band).” It wasn’t a good place to have a show but it was lots of fun.
- (I liked) Christ Church Hall. Not because it was a good venue. The sound definitely wasn't good… I kinda liked Chandler's...the sound *there* was good.
- Sound is the #1 thing for me that makes or breaks the show. If the sound sucks, I hate the show.
- South End (community center) was a nice place, sound was really good. I find it disappointing that we lost it.
- Christ Church is at the top, undisputed champion!...I’d be hard pressed to find anybody who could say there was a better-located venue with a better stage…the Center 200 (hockey arena) concourse is great…I love the stage. A lot of bands are taking the modest approach, they want to play on the floor. Give me the fuckin’ stage…and bring Malcolm (professional sound man).

Other musicians cited Smooth Herman's as a good place to play, as they were willing to sacrifice playing to the ‘right crowd” for good sound, but no one cited it as a favorite. There were differing opinions on playing to “popular bars” but there was a unanimous consensus that they would never be the *best* places in Sydney to play.
One final point to be made about the issue of the indie aesthetic is that there was little discussion about musical equipment on the CBLocals board. Only 9 of the 503 threads started during my fieldwork related to discussions of musical equipment. Those who contributed to such conversations tended to be between 17 and 25 years of age. Tellingly, users brake and dylan-m—two musicians who identified session work as a goal—often participated in these types of threads on the CBLocals messageboard. At the end of the day, most musicians concede that there is not enough commerce within the CBLocals scene to be overly concerned with gear quality, as one drummer articulated:

I’ve never really been a gearhead…I know a lot of drum nerds, right? And, y’know, I can talk about gear and I can talk about cymbals and drums or whatever. But I really don’t give a shit, you know what I mean? I don’t read drum magazines to find out about the latest innovations in drum hardware. I just have what I have and I beat the hell out of it until it stops working and then I get something new or fix it or whatever, right?

What we can surmise from the discussions regarding sound quality, both in venues and in the studio, is that not everyone agreed to the same aesthetic. For many people, “good sound” was a big priority. For others, “just doing it” was the bigger priority. To some of them, sound that was “too good” (“antiseptic,” as one interviewee called it) would provide disincentive to young, aspiring musicians. This debate intersected with sociological ones as “good sound” was also equated with Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s—which the “bar crowd” frequented. However, it demonstrated that the “gearhead” culture described by the aforementioned drummer was not an intense driving factor in the CBLocals scene. However, with the influence of younger musicians such as brake and dylan-m, that appeared to be gradually changing.
“Too Young to Sell Out”: The Aselin Debison Scenario

Glace Bay’s Aselin Debison was a highly visible teenage pop star in 2005. Four years earlier, she signed to Sony Classical Worldwide Records based on the sales of The Littlest Angel (Cowan, 2002). By 2002, she had starred in a TV special, performed at Ottawa’s Canada Day celebrations in Ottawa as well as for Queen Elizabeth II (Leblanc, April 13, 2002). She was preparing to tour for a second album on Epic Records, Bigger Than Me, a light rock/pop transition from earlier, more Celtic influenced work. None of Aselin Debison’s shows have been promoted on CBLocals nor has she ever appeared on the messageboard or at a Locals-promoted show to promote or discuss her work.

However, Debison became the subject of a long CBLocals thread— one that briefly reappeared in 2006— when musicians were auditioned to go on tour with her. Her management held auditions for musicians to play with Debison and word had gotten out among users that some members of bands familiar to CBLocals users were participating. Dropkick Tompkins started the thread with apparent surprise that people he knew were going to audition. In a response later in the thread, he clarified that this was simply surprise and not outrage:

what the fuck? Kevo Wade and Brett Waye are trying out for this shit now I hear?

(Posted on CBLocals board: Wed Apr 13, 2005 9:47 pm)

I just kinda found it weird that a metal head, a country/punk superstar and a progmaster bassist would be asked to play for Aselin Debison. But then again London from Closet Monster played with Avril Lavigne...

(Posted on CBLocals board: Wed Apr 13, 2005 11:41 pm)
The first few replies were fairly supportive of the musicians auditioning. It took until Page 2 of the thread for D-A-R-R-Y-L to raise the insinuation of selling out:

You say it's about money...yer all way too young to sell out. damn yer just young...enjoy playing music, uncompromised… This is whoring to the nth power…sorry to be a bastard, i dont know why i care.

(Posted on CBLocals board: Thu Apr 14, 2005 1:41 am)

Many opinions were cast as to whether playing for Aselin Debison was “selling out.” My informal count of opinions in the thread was that 21 people felt it was not, one felt it was, with six neutral voices on the subject (largely disinterest but respect for everyone’s choice on the matter). One person (Chaplin) rather expressively reversed his opinion when he auditioned and did not receive a callback. He had choice words for Steven Muise (presumably the individual in charge of the auditions). Another (TJonz) pointed out that some people who received a call back from managers for the second round of auditions had not attended the first (“not really fair, but what is?”).

One of the arguments that was raised in the thread would resurface in my interviews and then again in 2007. rory created a scenario very similar to the aforementioned EDS band sponsorship scenario; looking at it as a job but a much better job than non-musical alternatives:

i would whore myself to Aselin Debison for a couple of hours a day before i would whore myself to (call center) eds or the summer job lottery. i don't think anyone is pretending this is the direction they want to take there music. its an awesome summer job, that probly pays at least as well as what you'd make slaving 40+ hours/week cleening toilets and flipping burgers, or wearing the same
dress pants 5 days a week in a cubical…

(Posted on CBLocals board: Thu Apr 14, 2005 9:45 am)

Despite the negative connotations of pop music within the CBLocals scene and the historical negativity of the concept of “selling out,” there was a large echo of this opinion in my interviews, regardless of age or musical interest. One expatriate musician said of the Debison gig, "you can make a ton of money doing that and come back…and just do things you like. It’s a give-and-take world. Sometimes ya gotta do some shit you don’t like." Another person professed disdain for Debison's music but conceded that "for a 19 year old, that's a great experience."

If there was such a thing as “selling out,” no one was ready to come forward to say that playing for the summer with Aselin Debison was it. Even messageboard cynic Jeffolation, who had chided the trendiness of emo fans and the bands that catered to this trendiness, saw no harm in participating:

Well, if you view it as a job to make money, nothing inherently wrong with that. It ain't art, but I'm sure most people who applied for the position knew that. No one's getting hurt by it, no more so then working at shell or wal-mart…I would worry about falling asleep while trying to play that shitty "music" though, oi vey...

(Posted on CBLocals board: Thu Apr 14, 2005 2:30 am)

As long as musicians did not abandon the projects in which they were currently participating, few people saw any reason not to participate with Debison’s tour. Few people envisioned the possibility of a permanent job with Debison. One scene member described a
different perspective of selling out: flat-out leaving one band for another because the latter was more popular.

Say if you were in a band and you got offered to be in this band that was already successful, nominated for a Juno, because their guitar player dropped. And (you say) “I’m going to quit this band and break up this band to go with a successful band that’s already on the market” …(this happened) not with somebody in Cape Breton but somebody I know … the band that he broke up, they were just reaching success and he was like “see ya later, I’m gonna go play guitar in this band.” I don’t know, I think that’s selling out.

The individual felt that this musician had sold out because a band’s lineup had been irrevocably altered due to pursuit of a higher paying gig. The Aselin Debison auditions were for a summer tour. This would provide some money for a young, aspiring musician but the temporary status of the assignment would not disrupt the musician’s other projects. In the former scenario, the critic insists the musician alienates himself from his work to “sell out.” In the latter scenario, the critic proposes the musician may feel alienated from their work with Debison but he strengthens his likelihood to work on music to which he feels connected.

The Aselin Debison saga demonstrated that the vast majority of the community had drawn one clear line in the sand over selling out. Temporary work with musical projects in which one did not believe was not selling out. It was merely another way to make a living alongside artistic endeavors. Interviewees cited similar endeavors in their past. One musician noted that despite disdaining cover bands, he had once performed in one (“as a job, it’s not that hard”). Two participants in the 1990s Louisbourg production “Fortress Follies” — traditional
music/comedy set in the area's historical base—agreed it was a “hokey” but worthwhile teenage summer job. They viewed an Aselin Debison tour in the same light.

Therefore, within the CBLocals scene, there is a clear demonstration that the majority of participants are willing to be alienated from some forms of musical labor. Many of the economic considerations mentioned in Chapter 1 play a significant part in providing a different perspective on “selling out.” The level of employment within Cape Breton was such that more people felt alienated from employment within the area on a general basis. As such, they were more willing to take up musical opportunities with pop stars such as Debison as it seemed a better alternative.

In a national context, it is unlikely that many would view this in the same fashion, as Debison’s music commanded little attention or respect with rock music circles across the country.

CONCLUSION

Discussions about selling out in indie rock cannot be removed from their context. The Cape Breton context provides a number of variables. Cape Breton is in Canada and therefore the concept of government funding is not an unusual one. However, there is also a history of distrust from Cape Bretoners towards the provincial government that is disproportionate from other situations in Canada and the world. It is in this environment that a critic such as Rod Gale can evoke “selling out” in a libertarian-conservative context to refer to the government, rather than to private sector corporate record labels.

However, the differing philosophies on professionalism reveal that what constitutes a musical professional is dependent heavily on context. Specifically this study reveals both the national and regional contexts as starting points for contention on these terms. In Canada, the financial success of bands such as The Arcade Fire, Broken Social Scene and Feist have their roots in significant federal arts grants. Whereas “selling out” to indie rock fans is often
conceived as signing with a large corporation to produce music, others considered accepting money from a provincial government as a regressive solution and a form of selling out. They objected to state-supported professionalism. HOR participants chose to pursue this path of professionalism as an alternative (or possible complement) to privately-supported professionalism.

The Canadian context has revealed that there is a strong level of acceptance of state-supported art on a national level. However, the minor levels of antagonism towards provincial funding in Nova Scotia can be seen as a contextual issue reflective of larger tensions between Cape Breton and the rest of the province. One issue at hand is the cultural imaginary: Funding critics tired of the reputation Cape Bretoners had for seeking “government handouts.” In this imaginary, the HOR contributed to the negative qualities of entitlement and lack of self-sufficiency.

Major cities present sizable venues for bands to play their style of music without the allegations of “selling out.” Industrial Cape Breton does not possess such venues. Thornton (1996) demonstrates that the conflict between popular venues and underground venues is not unique to Cape Breton. Still, heavily populated cities are likely to have more “indie rock” fans to a degree that it is financially profitable to cater exclusively to them. The conundrum of playing at Smooth Herman’s in Cape Breton is this: if a band wishes to harbor professional aspirations in the area, how can they do it without playing to the audience that many CBLocals audiences loathe?

I found the number of people willing to play with Aselin Debison surprising in the context of North American “indie rock” but not at all in the Cape Breton context where any labor is difficult to find. Selling music to corporations is salient in other parts of Canada and the
United States, where companies proactively recruit rock bands and where opportunities for employment are more plentiful. In the CBLocals scene, a more pressing concern is whether or not it is progressive to solicit help from a government that many feel does not help economic depression.

This influenced perceptions of “selling out” within the CBLocals scene. It also influenced to what degree people were willing to alienate themselves from work in music. Therefore, we cannot judge “selling out” to be the same in any given indie rock music scene. I propose that issues of alienation and “selling out” need to be placed under the lens of localism rather than globalism. As we do this, we discover more flexible boundaries between what people consider authentic and “selling out,” as well as what situations are more likely to encourage people to push those boundaries.
(In) terms of the messageboard, I probably check it 4 or 5 times a day, it's embarrassing! (laughs) My confession.

- An interviewee discusses her love/hate relationship with the CBLocals messageboard.

I argue in this dissertation that the CBLocals scene is different from its pre-Internet state, but that I understand the CBLocals website and messageboard not as a separate community but as part of the infrastructure that supports the CBLocals scene. This perspective is informed by Turner's (2009) description of cultural infrastructures and Wilson and Atkinson's (2005) call to understand the integration, rather than the separation, of offline and online activity as the reality of present-day scenes. It was used, all at once, as a tool for promoting shows, a social lubricant and a host for a number of significant debates on the community as a whole.

In the initial stages of the Internet's development, it was seldom portrayed as part of cultural infrastructure. Scholars usually imagined it in two polarizing fashions:

- For many pundits, the Internet was seen as a technological marvel that would bring a new Enlightenment to transform the world...some people truly had such expectations and experiences...yet, not everyone saw the Internet as utopian. In some accounts, it was viewed as the destroyer of identity and community. The Dystopians' major concern was the supposed inauthenticity of Internet contact. Critics wondered if relationships between people who never see, smell and hear each other could be the basis for true community. They feared that people would become alienated from one another if their lives were spent online, interfacing only with computers and TV screens. (p. 26)
Wellman states that the utopian visionaries and the dystopian naysayers shared four traits: each assumed the Internet would draw people away from other interpersonal pursuits, each relied on supposition rather than ethnographic observation, each mistakenly viewed the Internet as a separate social system rather than as part of an integrated communication approach, and each assumed a technological determinist perspective (p. 27). Wellman concludes that history has demonstrated both arguments as overreaching. As such, our perspective on new media is not on direct effects but rather examining it as an infrastructural piece of communities.

I approached this dissertation carefully attempting to avoid the aforementioned pitfalls. I was examining the CBLocals website and messageboard as tools for promoting the scene and observed that interpersonal relationships were ongoing. I rooted the study in a deep ethnographic methodology that accounts for both online and offline experience rather than on my assumptions of what the effects of the CBLocals website might be on the community. This dissertation adopts the approach of Wilson and Atkinson (2005) that suggests that we no longer can treat music scenes as online or offline but rather as integrated communities. Hence I did not take on the third quality of utopianists/dystopianists, approaching the CBLocals community as an either/or situation.

Early in my research, I approached the project believing the use of a website and forum for specifically local purposes would counteract what I saw as an outmoded technologically deterministic theory of “glocalism” that pervaded music scene studies. It was unclear to me if my ethnography would bear that premise out.

What I found in my fieldwork was more interesting than the proof of that supposition. Granted, in Chapters Two and Three, I have demonstrated that the local context surrounding the CBLocals scene still matters tremendously. However, I also found that how users reacted to
CBLocals uncovered a little discussed emotional state about the Internet as a medium. I concluded from my interviews and fieldwork that the Internet produced a tremendous ambivalence in scene participants.

I found that the majority of users were inclined to talk about CBLocals in grand terms, either stressing its positive impact as something that could never be replaced or arguing that its negatives were unique to the Internet. There was a significant minority whose feedback did not correspond to this line of thought. One user remarked about a messageboard war between two users: “they are who they are. I don’t think they need the Internet to fight.” When I queried another about how different the scene would be without the CBLocals website, he concluded “I don’t think it would make much of a difference, I think we’d keep right on truckin’.”

Yet these users remained the exception to the rule. For whatever infrastructural impact a messageboard and website has, the perception among users is that its impact is great. Therefore it greatly shapes how the users perceive the state of their community. However, there is not a consensus that the positives have outweighed the negatives, or vice-versa.

I argue, based on this chapter’s analysis, that the result of the technological advances within the scene has not been a celebration of utopia or a dreading of dystopia. Instead, the CBLocals website and messageboard has brought feelings of ambivalence. This ambivalence is rooted in the acknowledgment that the website and messageboard have made new conversations possible, but also in nostalgia for what users feel has been lost along the way.

In this chapter, I identify four issues that were often repeated in my interviews about CBLocals: the signal-to-noise ratio on the messageboard, use of the website and messageboard as a promotional tool, the use of the website specifically and Internet generally to grow the community and the perceived effects of the Internet on people’s interactive styles. Each line of
conversation finds users conflicted with each other, but also themselves, over how much positive and negative effect the Internet has had on their community.

**SIGNAL-TO-NOISE**

Theres always gonna be 2 opinions on this subject. one being that its a messageboard, and people should be able to say whatever the fuck they want without bein banned. The second being that it makes everyone in cblocals look like a bunch of ignorant pieces of shit, more or less anyways.  

(Kensen ‘J, posted on CBLocals board: Fri Apr 28, 2006 9:02 pm)

Christopher Cimino (1994) introduced the concept of signal-to-noise to describe the challenges of moderating Internet forums. These challenges persist to this day. Cimino broadly defines “signal-to-noise” as the ratio of content on a website or forum that meets what the target audience desires as opposed to what is perceived as “extraneous.” He carefully identifies the complication of specifically applying it. It is difficult for users to come to a consensus on what qualifies as “noise”:

Netters…talk about signal to noise ratio. The better a list meets the demands of a nitch [sic] the greater the signal. The more extraneous stuff included, the more noise. Too much noise and the list loses subscribers. The volume doesn’t matter, the noise does. Here’s the catch. Noise is the eyes of the beholder. This is especially true of a list that has a broadly defined nitch. Each person posting a message thinks they are sending a signal based on their interpretation of what the purpose of the list is.
The “catch” is further complicated by the fact that some ‘netters are inclined to believe that too strict a “signal” with no “noise” makes for an unimaginative forum. John Coate (1998) discusses the phenomenon of “topic drift” and argues that useful categorizations of threads and search tools allow for individuals to locate “on topic” contributions while still not disrupting the flow of subjects that drift away from the main idea:

Online conversation is, by its very nature, a mix of organization and chaos…it’s useful to have labels for each discussion so you can get to the information you seek with efficiency…when talking, the whims of people take the discussion off on any number of tangents. We have come to call this process of meandering “topic drift” and it often leads to the most delightful illuminations. So much so that many people find this to be the most appealing aspects of the whole online scene. But it can conflict with other peoples’ expectations that a conversation will consist of material that is truly in keeping with the theme of the topic. This is where good searching tools are helpful.

The CBLocals moderators had addressed a situation like what Coate describes in 2005. People were starting threads on subjects that were not specific to Cape Breton or to music. This left users finding the messageboard difficult to navigate due to an excess of posts unrelated to its mandate. Moreover, users were starting multiple threads that did not relate to music. For example, someone from Moncton might get excited about a television show s/he really liked and start a thread asking users if they were excited about a particular episode. The perceived problem was that these threads overshadowed discussion over shows, promotion and community development, presumably the main function of the messageboards.
In response, Doyle created the General Discussion forum in January 2005. People came together from the various Locals boards on this one messageboard to talk about “universal” topics such as pop music, politics, television, random Internet links and several other topics. The purpose of the forum as stated on the forum index webpage is “the place to discuss your topics that aren’t about underground culture, or your Locals scene/region specific.” However, as Cimino finds on many forums, not everyone had agreed that general discussion topics on local forums was a problem. Hence, the results of the General Discussion forum were mixed.

General Discussion did attract users. Over two years, it averaged about 60 posts a day. However, the CBLocals forum averaged 107 posts a day over a four year period. Theoretically, more people are welcomed into General Discussion but signing up for a Locals account allows users to post to whichever forums they want. During my observation period, there were very few posts from people who were not either from the Cape Breton area, living in the Cape Breton area or wanting to promote something to the Cape Breton area. Despite this, the post count on the CBLocals forum remained high (though not nearly as high as the highly populated MonctonLocals forum where roughly 30 threads are updated daily) because of many threads that did not seem to belong.

Some users were mystified at how much discussion pervaded the CBLocals forum that related neither to music nor Cape Breton nor the scene in general. One interviewee was incredulous at those who complained of being banned from the CBLocals forum after engaging in arguments with other users using incendiary language. To her thinking, even if hate speech was not grounds for banning, violating the signal-to-noise ratio would be: “(If) you were on a Nelly Furtado fan forum or whatever and you were calling everyone a ‘fag’…you’d be kicked off immediately…(not for the slur) but because you’re not talking about Nelly Furtado.”
However, the same user later pointed out that signal-to-noise ratio was bound to vary on the CBLocals messageboard because the users had exhausted music-related subjects:

I think Locals is becoming more of a community in its own right, not just a music community…not necessarily everybody that posts on Locals goes to shows. The mantra of CBLocals seems to be changing even though the name is still the same. It’s become more about people getting in touch with other people for a variety of things, music being one of them. There’s a lot of discussion about other things. Non-local things. Which isn’t bad, it’s just a shift…which had to happen because people can’t talk about music and skateboarding for 10 years. They would get tired. There can only be so many "what’s your favorite band" threads.

Age discrepancy only complicates the signal-to-noise perception. First, the aforementioned user may have believed that the progression to non-local and non-musical topics was inevitable. However, younger users that had not had these conversations may not have been apt to feel the same way. A user in his 30s noted that certain discussions that he had heard many times in his life and on the Internet would resurface on the messageboard much to his annoyance:

I don’t know how many times I can read about “why isn’t (Cape Breton University) downtown?”…I’ve done that conversation. Yeah, it sucks but are we gonna do anything about it? I just feel like it’s a waste of time to have that conversation, but for someone who’s maybe 10, 15 years younger than me, they might think that no one’s had that conversation before.

Older users also perceived younger users as contributing to the “noise” due to their lack of maturity. Lackaff (2004) refers to “barbarian invasion”: when users of varying ages and of varying language abilities clash over the appropriateness of material. CBLocals is an interesting
example due to its outmigration of people between the ages of 18-24. Left behind was a core of users in their 20s and 30s with less of their peers than in other cities’ messageboards such as Halifax and Moncton. These users would be annoyed by teenage users’ lack of punctuation, articulation, substance or a tendency to over-post. Some were forgiving. “I don’t feel bad about the younger posters as people,” said a scene veteran, “it’s just a generational difference. High post counts are usually pretty telling of a user I avoid reading.”

Most interviewees described the board as having shifted from just talking about local music and/or music in general. However, an analysis of the activity on the CBLocals messageboard during my fieldwork indicates that the perception of topic drift did not match up to the subject of the majority of the threads on the messageboard. I counted the discussion threads on the forum that ended during my fieldwork period and discovered that, on the surface, the majority of the threads were “on topic” (See TABLE 4.1). I eyed categories such as “general pop culture” or “miscellaneous.” Most other topics related either to local music, the website itself or the scene as a whole.

However, I then observed which threads carried the most replies (TABLE 4.2). Ten threads exceeded 70 replies; some of these threads had a lifespan that preceded the beginning of the study. (The most replied thread was about Ultimate Frisbee and it continued on for 18 more posts after I left home to return to Atlanta). What I discovered was that heavily-replied threads usually entailed fairly plain contributions (the Frisbee thread was basically filled with date after date for the games) or were scene-related subjects that elicited passionate responses. The latter threads were remembered less for being relevant to the community mantra and more for contentiousness that led people to go askew with one-line insults or observations.
There were other noteworthy pieces of information about the threads. First, three of the threads were locked during the summer. This means that each of these threads could have elicited many *more* replies had the moderator not halted them. It also indicates that the moderator found these threads inappropriate. Second, of the seven remaining threads, only one began as I did my fieldwork whereas all three locked threads began and ended during my time of
**TABLE 4.1: Threads on CBLocals May 15-August 1, 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of threads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion or discussion of upcoming shows:</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Shows not based in Cape Breton):</em></td>
<td><em>(25)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of an artist/band’s MP3s or CDs:</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Artists not from/based in Cape Breton):</em></td>
<td><em>(29)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous:</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on locals bands or the scene:</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians looking for projects:</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Musicians not from/based in Cape Breton):</em></td>
<td><em>(7)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General music commentary:</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post related to functioning of website or messageboard:</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist/band looking for a show:</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Artists not from/based in Cape Breton):</em></td>
<td><em>(15)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misplaced threads (buy &amp; sell, rides, skateboarding):</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of non-music art/entertainment events:</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(event not in Cape Breton):</em></td>
<td><em>(1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General commentary on Cape Breton:</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for contact information:</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General pop culture commentary:</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threads pertaining to gear or tech:</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday wishes:</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-music get-togethers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>503</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 4.2: Top Ten Threads Based on Number of Replies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread</th>
<th># of Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate Frisbee!!! (providing details of the next time and location for a Frisbee game)</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aselin Debison Band??!?!? (a debate on if playing with the Cape Breton teen singer is “selling out”)</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get off the coke and E! you assholes! (a debate on drug use within the scene and community)</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Zero (A member of the band develops an ongoing thread to discuss their activities)</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why I was totally jerking your chain about Dylan-m * (poorhaus explains his rationale for banning (and reinstating) dylan-m)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zieg Heil to the Baninator!* (Dropkick Tompkins complains about poorhaus’ moderation and users take sides)</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHETICAMP SHOW MAY 27TH! (promoting an event in the Cheticamp area)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Downfall @ Bunker's Every Thursday in July (A member of the band updates promotion of their weekly Bunker’s shows)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... * (a debate “Glennard’s” new avatar, originally titled “Glenn’s doucholithic avatar”)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lists are dirty and fantastic. (a discussion on people’s favorite singing voices)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = the moderator of the CBLocals messageboard “locked” this thread, disabling the users’ ability to make additional posts.
study. Third, threads relevant to the subject of music were not necessarily substantive in their content. For instance, in the “lists” threads about singers, very few people took the time to detail the reasons behind their choices. Several lists threads on Locals read in this fashion, in which people provide selections but engage in very little dialogue.

My interviewees had largely come to a consensus that the CBLocals forum was better when the signal-to-noise ratio was flexible. Nevertheless, even with their flexible standards, they still concluded that the messageboard was cluttered with too much noise. What my analysis of the thread count demonstrates is that the number of threads relevant to music and local promotion was not at the heart of what they perceived to be the problem. Instead, the problem was that the most active threads that featured actual conversation rather than strict information centered on the controversial issue of the new moderation. These threads featured mostly largely contentious and non-substantive one-line posts in which users exchanged insults.

I concluded that it was in these threads that I could find the source of what my interviewees, admittedly an older skewing of the overall CBLocals demographic, were describing as noise. First, these threads featured content that, in and of itself, embodied what the interviewees did not like. Second, the source of the discussion in these threads was the attempt from moderator poorhaus to “clean up” the CBLocals messageboard. The specific “boiling point” was the banning of user Dylan-m from the messageboard, which occurred shortly before my fieldwork began.

The “Bannination” of dylan-m

Before 2003, users frequently fashioned the guestbook as their own messageboard, making non-stop posts back-and-forth, creating an interactive venue out of something intended to be largely static. From the guestbook to the messageboard, conflict has been constant, with
furious arguments taking center stage. Older users often invoked the term “guestbook wars” to describe many disputes that had occurred there over the years. These included debates on the integrity of various promoters, the perceived sexism in rap group Jah Prophets’ song “Sluts,” and a spamming effort from white supremacists that administrators vigilantly fought against in what one former admin described as "a Team A vs. Team B situation."

Emo/screamo music and its critics (often metal musicians and fans) were at the center of what most people described as a messageboard version of the “guestbook wars.” Moderators felt that some of the people making posts were being unnecessarily incendiary in expressing their opinions. Among the users frequently pointed out were septicsystem, Jimmy and Jeffolation. These users were all vocal critics of the “emo” trend in CBLocals music.

septicsystem and Jimmy also posted on behalf of Canker; practitioners of a musical form known as “grindcore.” This is a combination of distortion, high-speed riffs and guttural vocals. ChrisHansen100 (whom users publicly identified without refutation as septicsystem under a new username) referred to Canker in 2008 as “toxic sludge in G-standard tuning.” The band's MySpace website refers to itself as “Sydney, Nova Scotia’s most vile creation since the Tarponds.” One interviewee mused that these users participated very little at shows— "they stand outside and smoke most of the time, don’t know why they bother showing up." This self-imposed isolation was much like that of Jeffolation, a frequent CBLocals user in his early-20s. Several people with whom I spoke claimed to know him. “Real nice guy, actually,” one of my friends told me, as though this would come as a great surprise given his messageboard reputation. Yet no one was able to point him out to me at any show.
None of the users invoked the terms “hate speech” to describe their posts, but many took issue with what they felt was blatant homophobia. This often took the form of very rancorous posts to a variety of CBLocals threads. This is a small sampling of posts I found in the archives:

post hardcore emo is (overrated). Like that shitty gay crap Protest the Hero(yeah i know im going to hear it for that one) but that shit is so damn overrated, give me a break…  

(Septic System, posted on CBLocals board: Wed Jan 18, 2006 5:17 pm)

SOCIETY TODAY IS FAGGOTS, JUNKIES, AND BISEXUAL HIPPIES!!! If you are a straight male, you dont belong. Posting on this board does nothing to change it either.  

(Septic System, posted on CBLocals board: Thu Dec 22, 2005 5:40 pm)

In other news Chris had an anal gang bang with all the members of shotgun rules the other day. 'Cause they were impressed with his sweater.  

(Jimmy, posted on CBLocals board: Wed Apr 12, 2006 12:11 am, in response to Christopher's criticism of his music project, Electric Fucks)

(ruthlessforum.com) and relapse are the best boards I've come across on the net. Uppity hipster faggots don't do so well there.  

(Jeffolation, posted on CBLocals board: Mon Apr 10, 2006 6:08 pm)

Jeffolation also responded to Shayna, in a thread on music festivals: “Anyone that would voluntarily hang around your person is probably suffering from severe brain damage or sucks as a human being, so I think your input on the matter isn't really needed.”

Harry Doyle felt, in 2006, that the messageboard had reached a point where the messageboard rancor was too much. On April 24, shortly before I began my fieldwork, Doyle
posted to the main CBLocals site to announce suspension of the forum. He claimed that he and other CBLocals administrators lacked the interest to properly moderate the board. Furthermore, he implied a complete shutdown of the CBLocals site itself might not be far off:

i've locked the cblocals forum. i haven't been able to find somebody really interested and passionate to manage the site, so until i do i'm going to leave the messageboard shut down. if i can't find somebody i think is suitable i will probably shut the cblocals main site down shortly. the other locals sites are managed by a great bunch of people and i plan to continue to stay involved on a technical level and possibly work on future improvements to locals.

poorhaus quickly volunteered for the task of moderating the board—essentially to save the CBLocals site itself as well. Users identified poorhaus as Halifax-residing musician Sean MacGillvary, a former bandmate of Harry Doyle. poorhaus announced his intentions to moderate with the none-too-subtly titled post “You fucking motherfuckers”:

This forum has gone absolutely to shit. Most other forums require very little moderation, but you idiots can't seem to keep it real. I don't live in Cape Breton anymore, I'm not part of your highschool politics, and I don't give a good goddamn who I ban and who I don't. If you fuck around, you will be removed.

What's "fucking around"? That's up to me.

(Posted on CBLocals board: Mon Apr 24, 2006 3:31 am)

poorhaus made his post at 3:31am in the morning. Within an hour, he had banned three accounts when each user criticized his actions. The thread became highly active and there were both arguments for and against poorhaus’ actions. The majority of responses were one-to-three
lines. This is significant as poorhaus encouraged users to discuss the pros and cons of his actions in detail although most opinions were offered with little explanation.

Among poorhaus' supporters were those that were involved as moderators of the messageboard or as admins to the website. James stated that while Sean’s bans seemed arbitrary, most of the “victims” had been trolls or people who were notorious for instigating arguments. Joe concurred, writing that “banning the shit disturbers is probably the only way this place will become a place for at least minor constructive conversation. the occasional argument in one thing, but the trolling that went on here is utter bullshit.” Other users offered simple feedback. Steve F simply wrote “I think he’s doing a pretty good job actually,” which Brake and Christopher cut and paste for their opinions. Brett more colorfully wrote “The messageboard is finally receiving the long-overdue enema that it desperately needs.” Former moderator Hitokiri wrote “Perhaps I'll write a song about the reclamation of the cblocals messageboard for actual dicussion... Requiem for a Troll. It'll become a scene anthem and I'll be a scene hero with my own groupie fashion scenester following!!!” AP greeted the bannings enthusiastically with a post stating “haus dors the banninator!”

However, poorhaus’ critics cried “censorship!” or complained about favoritism. Dropkick Tompkins found it “ironic” that Fjord was banned for posting a picture depicting fascism in response to poorhaus’ actions. He also started a thread titled “Zieg Heil to the Banninator!” in which Glennard replied “Ah, the oxymoron that is limited freedom of speech.” Jimmy also called it “censorship” and made a correlation to an outdoors show being suspended due to noise complaints (“it looks like the censorship is making it to the music”).

Unsurprisingly, some of the chief critics were those that had previously been banned and would soon be subject to that same treatment. They argued that poorhaus was not acting against
incendiary activities, but protecting the hierarchy of the scene. Specifically, they felt that Jimmy, Septic System and Jeffolation were singled out for their disparaging of the popular all-ages (AA) act Drowning Shakespeare:

> What we have, is all of the people from shows who are: littlecrybaby/creepysmalltownhick/cravecomplimentsabouttheirband types. It's what the scene has always been based on. And when someone that isn't in their little closeknit group comes in and tries a form of humour, or a form of discussion that is out their range, the CRYBABY gets sooky, and THEY start the argument. And because everyone else is on the crybaby's side, the OTHER GUY gets banned. This happens quite a lot actually when one of those nitwits post some of their songs and then ask for an opinion. What those people really want is "Say my band is awesome! But don't say anything if you don't like it!"

(Sealface, posted on the CBLocals board: Sat Apr 29, 2006 10:17 am)

You people honestly shut out everyone who isn't apart of your goddamn clique, It's so blatent, It's so childish, It's so fucking pathetic. It's like a group of people in a mental hospital that don't want any real life "negativity" and you all need to have everything positive and sugar coated? When did opinions about bands become restricted? How come people aren't aloud to say what they really think about the indie garbage around here and not be banned for having a realistic opinion?

(Jimmy, posted on the CBLocals board: Mon May 01, 2006 12:32 am)

Others relayed to me that they felt many longtime scenesters were guilty of practices for which they felt users like Jeffolation, Sealface, the Tarrs and bobsaget were criticized. Dropkick
Tompkins pointed out that bobsaget was frequently chastised for making non-substantive one line posts, but when Lachie MacDonald made a one word post ("potatoes"), moderators ignored it. Lachie, identified by his username, was a long time member of the scene dating back to his involvement with the mid-1990s band Tilted. The critic argued that his seniority (and friendship with poorhaus) had unfairly granted him immunity from criticism.

Users James F.W. and JoelInglis pointed out to critics that as owner of the site and messageboard, Harry was entitled to have poorhaus moderate the board however he saw fit. Whereas poorhaus’ defenders used the website’s status of privately owned to defend the moderator’s actions, some critics’ accusations of censorship indicated that they viewed the website and forum as a public resource.

The height of the debate over poorhaus’ moderation of the board occurred when he banned dylan-m, identified by users as 17 year old drummer Dylan Mombourquette. Whereas many of the people that poorhaus banned were either little-known or considered incendiary by my interviewees, most viewed dylan-m favorably or at worst with indifference. dylan-m was only 15 years old when he began posting to the messageboard. Users initially greeted his posts condescendingly due to what was perceived as misspellings and a lack of serious content and formatting. Over time, however, most admired his ability as a drummer and found him to be a very positive influence on the scene.

poorhaus banned dylan-m due to his comments in a thread about an outdoor AA show featuring “tribute bands.” dylan-m was playing in a band that was paying tribute to Tool, however he decided to make a joke about the band Styx, a 70s progressive rock band held in low esteem among Locals fans. He posted: "actually, were not playing as tool anymore, we are now playign as styx, And were called The fag gang."
Before long, poorhaus banned dylan-m for his use of the word “fag.” dylan-m signed up for a new account (super mell) and maintained that simply filtering the word would solve the problem, rather than sidetracking the conversation into a use-by-use debate. poorhaus did not ban the new account but hesitated in restoring the old dylan-m account. The userbase appeared mostly united behind poorhaus up to that point, but dylan-m's banning had caused some to reevaluate their opinions.

D-A-R-R-Y-L argued that "a lot worse is jokingly said on halifaxlocals on a daily basis," reinstigating the class tensions discussed in Chapter 2. Craig Martellica stood by poorhaus, although he hoped for the reinstatement of dylan-m’s account: "he got caught in a web of rules. It is a web that has caught a lot of pests though and hopefully it will keep others from becoming pests." poorhaus justified differing HalifaxLocals treatment as a matter of context. For example, he defended “Halifag's” username on the basis of his declared status as a gay member of the Halifax scene. He also defended HalifaxLocals user gerry for his use of the word “fag” due to his father being gay.

In response to poorhaus’ response, TheBoyNamedKristen started a brief thread titled “I am a <minority> / have a family member who's <min>.” In it, he proposed starting a list for each minority/ethnic group for which certain members could “safely make fun of.” Ainsley argued poorhaus' rationalization between his HalifaxLocals and CBLocals actions was poor: "Are you fucking kidding me? So because I have gay relatives it's okay for me to call people faggots & dykes?"

poorhaus relented and reinstated dylan-m’s original username. He renamed the thread discussing dylan-m’s banning “Why I was totally jerking your chain about Dylan-m.” In an undated edit to his original post in the thread, he wrote "even after realizing that Dylan-m didn't
mean as much harm as he implied… I kind of let it linger a little, so you'd all get good and riled up about it, and read about it, post about it, and discuss it." He and dylan-m interacted amicably from that point forward, and he locked the thread after banning Dropkick Tompkins and PinkFloyd, who continued to protest his policies regarding word usage.

**Quality Control and Freedom: It's (Not) Just a Messageboard**

Within my interview sample that skewed towards the older users of CBLocals, I discovered that the majority of subjects agreed with poorhaus’ actions. The majority of interviewees referred to poorhaus as his identified real name, Sean MacGillvary, and indicated that they were familiar with him on some personal level. Therefore, the majority of users were aware of Sean’s status within the scene beyond “moderator of the messageboard.” The defenses of Sean were summarized in two lines of thinking: the messageboard needed to improve in quality and as a private owner of the website, Harry could authorize any moderator to act however he wanted to see fit. The chief criticism of Sean was that “it’s just a messageboard” with a smattering of opinions suggesting he played favorites, either intentionally or unintentionally.

I found that defenders of Sean’s actions focused less on individual incidents that caused banning but rather overall trends in users that led to what they saw as a “productive” board. Surprisingly, most people steered clear of discussing the actual use of homophobic language when defending Sean, instead focusing on intent. These users joyously greeted the banning of users like SepticSystem and Jimmy not because of their inappropriate language, but because they saw these users as *intentionally* attempting to disrupt the messageboard’s true function—to develop a community of performers and music fans in the industrial Cape Breton area.
One interviewee alleged that SepticSystem and Jimmy instigated the moderator of the messageboard into banning them only to cry foul once the ban occurred. The person was sympathetic to Sean’s actions and found that he was willing to take the time that others were not willing to spend to ban undesirable users. He argued that SepticSystem and Jimmy’s styles were not organic developments of style based on their intentional goading of moderators:

(They) are your classic disenfranchised angry youths looking simply to fight… it wasn't something that I was wanting to engage in and I recognized the futility of speaking with them...they were finally banned when they said "the only way to get me to stop is to ban me"…so then of course (they asked) "why did you ban me?"

I could not even identify the specific post that had led to Jeffolation’s banning. However, another interviewee that knew the user well and recalled his past noted, “he probably didn’t deserve to be banned for whatever he ultimately did that got him banned. But I could probably think of about 20 times where he posted something far worse.” The user concurred with Craig Martellica’s opinion that Jeffolation’s banning occurred more for comments like those against Shayna rather than his anti-emo opinions.

I found that older users were more likely to use terms like “content” or “quality posts” when describing positive contributions to the messageboard. This enforced the perception they had of the messageboard as a continued documentation of the scene. “I want good content,” said one admin and former moderator, “anyone that has something that will start a discussion. Not this name-calling bullshit.”

A handful of users also still saw CBLocals as “Harry’s website.” I found these users did not champion CBLocals as a zine in the sense of a general scene representation but rather as
individual expression. An admin remarked that it was distressing that critics did not start their own websites if they were dissatisfied with CBLocals (“I’d plug the hell out of it”). An interviewee that had visited the website not too long after its inception agreed, noting that even though CBLocals may have been interpreted as a public forum, it was still legally a forum for Harry’s expression:

> There was someone that got banned from the forum…and Harry was the one that (asked the moderator) to do it. With fully legitimate cause, kinda thing. And some of the guy who got banned’s friends were, like, calling out Harry… “who are you in CBLocals to do something like this?” And I was like: well for one—he’s Harry Doyle! He is CBLocals. And two, it’s his forum…he bought it! If you want to see the bills, they have his names at the bottom.

However, one of Sean’s critics disagreed, noting that while he did not like how the messageboard was run, that “it was the cool place to be.” Creating a new website or forum would be turning away from the scene, he argued. Hence he felt it was more productive to try to make the messageboard a more immediate and interactive forum where everything that was posted stayed. Besides that, he felt that the off-the-cuff posting and frequent arguments were what gave the messageboard life:

> The new moderator’s been banning a lot of people, I don’t like that. He also banned a lot of the people that were making it interesting, like Omnipotent Antijesus or Jeffolation. Those guys would make me laugh because everyone would get so riled up…for me, it should be a total free-for-all kinda thing. I like pizza, you like something else.
This user clearly championed the liberty of an unmoderated messageboard. I found that the majority of the critics of Sean did not believe a messageboard of any kind warranted taking seriously enough to moderate. “Fuck Sean MacGillvary,” one said with a laugh, “I like Sean…but it’s just a messageboard. It’s just entertainment.” An expatriate concurred, stating that he liked the Internet because “it’s mostly entertainment…you’re entitled to be stupid!”

Another concurred with this opinion noting that poorhaus' lack of person-to-person relationships with the banned users led to misunderstandings: “somebody makes a sarcastic remark, one person’s going to laugh, but it’s only the guy who knows that person (who knows) ‘he’s only being sarcastic, he would never say that in seriousness…”” For example, in a thread wishing gillian a happy birthday, joe posted “gillian can eff right off.” As gillian and joe had been involved in the scene longer than others, an experienced moderator could easily surmise that the post was a joke. The interviewee noted that not all sarcastic remarks, however, would be read as such by the moderator. Hence, one’s position in the CBLocals pecking order, he concluded, might adversely affect what s/he could “get away with” on the messageboard.

Disputes over poorhaus/Sean's moderation of the board revealed that users conflicted with each other over issues of quality on the messageboard. Some believed "it was a just a messageboard" and that it did not merit rigid regulation. Others disagreed and argued that in the Internet age, the messageboard acted as a representative of the scene. "What you type on there should correspond to what you'd say in real life," said one, arguing that the locality of the messageboard played a role as well. "There's a person corresponding with the username, people know who you are." Another lamented what people from outside Cape Breton were making of the scene with the messageboard as its primary reflection to the outside world:
If it was up to me, the messageboard would be totally deleted...because I mean, I think it puts a bad image on CBLocals. The messageboard right now, I think, doesn’t have anything to do with CBLocals. It’s just a link on the CBLocals page. If (people from away) associate that with CBLocals, they’d say “these people are crazy.” I think there needs to be a defined separation between the messageboard and CBLocals.

The situation involving poorhaus' moderation left older users dissatisfied with the code of conduct within the scene as a result of the website and messageboard. Still, a minority of interviewees rejected any nostalgic arguments for a pre-Internet yesteryear on the grounds that it circumvented these problems. One former AA promoter argued that the debates between alleged messageboard malcontents and moderators was no different than continuing disagreements between promoters and participants wishing to engage in activities such as underage drug use or drinking:

The nature of punk rockers is that they reject authority…you are always gonna have people saying “man, you’re killing my ‘fun!’” Who are you to dictate my ‘fun?’” Uhhhh, I’m the person who paid for the hall!!...I think punk rock is not being destructive and stupid. Punk rock is being creative and building things. Punk rock is the D.I.Y. aesthetic.

This parallel was not lost on me as several of the users banned from the CBLocals messageboard at some point in their history had also advocated laxer regulations of AA events. Several had criticized Joe Costello for ejecting them for allegedly disruptive behavior and for underage drinking. Costello responded that such behavior threatened his relationship with hall owners who trusted him with their venues. However, a handful of my interviewees argued that
this was merely an extension of trying to prevent "acting out" at shows, in the same fashion that they felt messageboard regulation sacrificed "fun" for the sake of quality. "It seems like no one wants to have any fun," said one of AA shows and particularly of emo music fans, "it's just a bunch of people standing around pretending to be this great music scene.” So whereas some users argued that a low signal-to-noise ratio on the CBLocals messageboard reflected poorly on the scene, others simply saw it as symptomatic of the same day-to-day problems encountered offline, at least in the AA scene.

CBLOCALS AS PROMOTIONAL TOOL

Despite the bickering on the messageboard, the primary purpose of the CBLocals website is still technically defined as making Internet users in Cape Breton aware of music shows in the industrial Cape Breton area. The “About” section of the website states as much:

CBLocals.com is a website about underground music and skateboarding on cape breton island…most of the website contains dynamic content which is database driven. there are several dozen site administrators who post on local shows, skateboarding, and things of general interest to the local scene. the site originated in sydney, but we try to cover stuff in glace bay, new waterford, and the northside as well. we try not to discriminate against any types of local music. the site has a convenient backend for administrators so they can update the news, events, links, and bandlist without having to know any html...

With skate.cblocals.com and the skate.cblocals.com forum handling all concerns regarding skateboarding, this leaves the main CBLocals website and forum for people to turn to in order to promote their music events. However, the mission statement alone is cause for ambiguous feeling.
It was a somewhat confusing statement to some CBLocals users that the website would claim to “try not to discriminate against any types of local music.” For example, there was almost a uniform opinion that local cover band shows did not belong on the CBLocals website. Most people did not believe Celtic music belonged on there either but a minority dissented, with some saying if the musicians were obscure enough, they would belong on the site. One person thought the website admins and moderators “needed some serious re-thinking” about the “Celtic thing” and that promoting shows with the Celtic music community would help strengthen the website’s reputation as a promotional hub.

Also there were issues of whether or not a band could be too famous to be included in the events listing. One of my interviewees initially objected that a Savoy Theatre show featuring pop-punk band Not By Choice was posted on the website. He found the majority of the community overruled him and he relented arguing the point:

Not By Choice, a big pop band, right? Scott Gillard (promoted) the show. And, of course, Scott Gillard deserves a lot of respect, I mean a lot of respect, for what he’s done. But at the same time, I argued with him, personally, “that this is Not By Choice, this does not belong on CBLocals. As the top of the website says: the best underground music. What are you doing?”…but I mean, when it comes down to it, it’s uh…I suppose the majority is interested. And if the majority of people who like underground music also like Not By Choice, then who cares?

Put it on there.

Since Not By Choice had gained notoriety within the community, the event was ultimately declared “Locals worthy” despite the fact that no one argued the band was underground. Similarly, some users were privately leery that the House of Rock’s shows at
Smooth Herman’s and Daniel’s (but especially Herman’s) received attention on the website. Yet they usually conceded that interest from the community in House of Rock bands trumped the venue itself in terms of deeming it a Locals-worthy event to list. In fact, even most users conceded that even if Slowcoaster one day became a platinum selling act that returned to play at Center 200 (which seats over 4,000), they would still believe it be worthy of promoting on CBLocals.

It was more difficult to find consensus on whether or not CBLocals was an excellent promotional tool within the scene. On the surface, most of the responses suggested that it was, but other comments within my interviews suggested the website had worsened certain elements of promotion. Two issues that attracted discussion was the reliance, or overreliance, on the website and messageboard as promotional tools and how promoters reacted to each other on the forum.

“Every Show Should Have a Poster”

It was a typical summer weeknight on July 19, 2006 as I walked along Charlotte Street, killing time before the first set at a Bunker’s show. The “downtown” area of Sydney consists mostly of three parallel streets: George Street, Charlotte Street and the Esplanade. The Esplanade stands before the Sydney Boardwalk, where one can look across the Sydney Harbour to see Westmount, a CBRM community of approximately 3000 people. Charlotte Street was dead on most weeknights. Whereas I have often found that Halifax contains a modicum of activity on weeknights in the summer, Sydney was quiet— with a pocket of people passing by on occasion. Indeed, by the end of this night, I would find myself among only 10-15 people listening to the headline act at Bunker’s.
One shop on Charlotte Street is Cape Breton Curiosities. The posters in its window on this night revealed how the consumer vision of Cape Breton was a radical departure from the Cape Breton I was witnessing for most of the summer:

- Bernie MacCuish’s “Walk on Water” CD (a country music effort)
- 4 Men in a Tub (described on its website as “a unique blend of original and tradition songs, jazz standards, fiddle tunes and character driven sketches.”)
- Fallite CD (a compilation of Celtic music)
- Louisbourg’s Murder Mystery Tour (a murder mystery play held at the National Historic Site in Louisbourg)
- “The Mudder Tongue” book (a compilation of Cape Breton catchphrases and dialect. The cover raves about being featured on regional shows such as “Live at Five” and “BT” as well as the national “Canada AM.”)
- Tarabish cards (a trick taking card game played predominantly in Cape Breton)
- Cape Breton Magazine (now defunct magazine featuring Natalie and Buddy MacMaster—icons of Cape Breton fiddle music—on its cover)
- A license plate bearing the slogan “4U2 SEA”
- “Celtic and Traditional Lullabies from our Cape Breton” CD (another Celtic compilation)

What I did not see was a single CD, T-shirt or flyer advertising a show for any of the bands that were promoted on CBLocals. I turned to the streets to check out the telephone poles to see what posters had been put up. I found posters for the Antigonish music festival Evolve, a subject of great discussion every year on the Locals forums. I also found the occasional poster
promoting the House of Rock’s pre-summer tour shows. The most visible posters were for The Downfall, who played regular Thursday shows at Bunker’s in Tom Fun’s absence.

I did not see a single poster for a show featuring Drowning Shakespeare, Richmond Hill or Violent Theory. My observations would lead me to the conclusion that they were the most popular band in the all-ages (AA) scene. Yet there was not much visible promotion downtown to reflect this.

It was instantly noticeable how habitual the use of the website was among the CBLocals community. By “habitual,” I refer not to the frequency of the visits but rather how the users describe their behavior when visiting the site. A majority of my interviewees admitted to repeatedly visiting even when they had no immediately identifiable cause. “It’s my homepage,” said one user. “It’s just there whenever I open up the Internet.” Another user correlated his first use of the Internet with his first use of CBLocals and he found it impossible to disentangle the two: “CBLocals has always been a part of my Internet.”

Most users incorporated the actual Locals page as their “go to” guide for what to do over the weekend. The CBLocals page took on a significantly increased amount of importance for promoting events in a city such as Sydney, which most participants confessed was lacking in satisfactory promotional outlets. One person recounted moving to Cape Breton and being completely unaware of a music scene until a friend from away pointed out the website:

When you're not from here and you don’t know about things, you have no idea what’s going on. If there’s nothing going on, you go to the bars: there's absolutely nobody in the bars (I went to). My friend (not living in Cape Breton) told me “well, this (event) is going on and I said "how is it that you know this?”
She said, “I saw it on this website”…my first impression was “this is pretty cool, it’s a good forum for people. It’s just the community.”

Few people could identify any satisfying non-Internet publications that promoted events to their liking. Dave Mahalik’s offline, and eventually online, publication *What’s Goin’ On* ceased all publication in 2003. Local newspaper the *Cape Breton Post* was the most unsatisfying, as evidenced by this user’s comments:

I could never see it as a real legitimate news publication because it really wasn't up-to-date…it’s like a local newspaper that designed to make people happy and make sure everybody knows who’s dead (via obituaries) (laughs)… it was like big things that were community events, I don't remember them being at things like Christ Church Hall that were promoted by people that were part of the whole Locals thing, it wasn't like their job.

Arts publication *Boardwalk* had recently gone defunct. Users did not greet this with any strong emotion as they had largely ignored the publication save for a messageboard debate on the value of a swimsuit issue. This user’s comments reflected most participants’ perception of the once-weekly trade: "It drives me crazy…there’s nothing in the newspaper and *Boardwalk* isn’t effective at all because it’s bi-weekly and doesn’t really have what you’re looking for. And it’s stale and it’s poorly written."

Although the sprawl of industrial Cape Breton was a factor in CBLocals’ popularity, dissatisfaction with other forms of media also played a strong role. Industrial Cape was (and is) seen as having a huge void of information for entertainment press, especially as it pertains to music that is not Celtic, folk or country. However, some felt that CBLocals filled the gap so
successfully over time that much of the promotional work that had gone into the scene’s development was being overlooked.

No one has bothered to change the poll on the CBLocals corepage for years. The question is asked: “How are you informed of upcoming events?” The choices given are through the corepage, messageboard, posters on the street, word of mouth, or through "randomly stumbling upon them" in the local trade. The votes change and the reliability is suspect given how many times users may have voted from multiple locations. However, there is usually a 50/50 divide between those who rely on CBLocals (either via the corepage or messageboard) and other means to find their night’s entertainment.

Most people that I encountered at various events conceded that their first show experience occurred through word-of-mouth, which is also how they discovered the CBLocals website. I did not interview or talk with a single person who claimed to have come across the website or scene from an article in the local newspaper or from viewing posters on the sidewalk. As an entrée to the scene, nothing topped word-of-mouth. As a continuing link to the scene, the Internet reigned supreme.

The CBLocals website filled a promotional vacuum for the indie-rock scene. In some cases, online promotion was the full extent of some promoters within the CBLocals area. Rather than treating the website as a simple “stopping point” and leaving details of one’s show as one might leave a flyer in an office building for promotion, it behooved users to adapt their promotion to the habits of the userbase. During my research, I noticed three ways that promoters and bands used CBLocals to create awareness about their events:

1) By submitting a post to the administrators for display on the website’s front page, or “corepage.” If the post was detailed enough (e.g. a description of the show or a photo of the
show poster), it could be posted by an admin in the center of the corepage. Admins were also responsible for updating the “sidebar”: the right-hand column of the website which provided a summary of upcoming events in barebones detail.

2) By creating a thread on the messageboard about the show. Users often posted enthusiastic replies to shows they were anticipating. This helped to “bump” the post up near the top of the messageboard display and also to build anticipation among other users.

3) By “hijacking” another messageboard thread with a message about a show. This was most commonly employed by the Tom Fun Orchestra, who would interrupt contentious threads with messages about their upcoming shows.

Depending on the users’ habits, each promotional tactic had varying levels of success. Great Plains lost out on at least one attendee whose habit was to check only the sidebar of the corepage to inform her of events. None of the admins had included the event on the sidebar; only posting the initial message in the center where it was bumped down. This person surmised that the promotors and the band focused too much on the messageboard, which was quickly “becoming the website” (other users’ words) to many people. Another interviewee agreed, noting that fewer people requested admin privileges to the actual website because they felt they did not need it:

Before (the messageboard), everyone would fight for admin status so that they could make post to the CBJlocals (website). But you don’t need that anymore. You can grab attention to yourself just by using the (messageboard). I still think that takes away from the corepage a lot. I’ve gone to many people’s houses and looked at their computer and CBJlocals isn’t bookmarked but the forum page is!
They’re going directly to the forum page and not even looking at what’s on the corepage anymore!

One user recounted the URL of the messageboard just as readily as the CBLocals webpage despite the fact that it was not all that memorable: “I skip CBLocals and just type http://media.locals.ca/localsconf/viewforum.php?f=2…I can’t believe I remember it just like that.”

Despite this, most users identified the sidebar as the most comprehensive way to check shows out on CBLocals. One musician quipped, “I’ve never really wrote down a show—y’know, where it was at, the time and the date and (had it be) a problem…you can go to the events bar and plan your weekend.” This reliable measure remained in the hands of select members of the community, ranging from 10-30 people at any given time. Even fewer used the privilege. During my fieldwork, House of Rock, Under the Underground and Clayton D’orsay were the only local usernames that updated this section. From their Halifax residences, Out of Touch Records and poorhaus also each made an update to announce events in Cape Breton.

The messageboard form of promotion seemed to be the most salient in people’s minds as it was the element that displayed the most community interaction. One promoter admitted that the interactivity of the messageboard, as compared to the corepage, allowed him to survey users on whether or not to bring in an act at all:

I've posed questions on the messageboard; it's a good research tool. I've got a thirst for music all the time. Ah, what people are thinking to a degree. To see the level of how people perceive. I've actually thrown an artist on the website and asked "what do you think of them?"…will people come to see them or not?
For some bands and promoters, it appeared that the messageboard was the only tool they needed to attract an audience. One notable event demonstrated the power of the website and messageboard combined with word-of-mouth and no other promotional efforts. Start the Show’s July 19th show to kick off Drowning Shakespeare’s Canadian tour was originally scheduled for St. Mark’s Hall in Glace Bay. On the day of the event, the promoters had to move the event to Sydney River. Despite a 30-40 minute difference in driving distance and less than 24 hours to announce the change, over 100 enthusiastic teenagers turned up to see arguably the most popular band in the AA scene.

In the pre-Internet age, information such as lineup changes or—even more impractical—venue changes largely had to be communicated through word-of-mouth since very few in the community relied on a shared media outlet to inform them about shows. However, messageboard threads promoting shows often acted as their own “news centers” for the event: lineup changes, time changes and suggestions from the potential audience. The Start the Show venue change was one example. Another was a hastily arranged “open mic” on a Sunday, May 21st. At 12:41am that day, Rod Gale made a post to the CBLocals board:

I have no idea whether this might happen or not; but Aarron from Airport was suggesting that it might be nice to have an Open Mic sort of thing happen at The Leaf this Sunday since Jordan from the band is home and nothing seems to be going on and the PA will be set up anyway.

By the time the evening came around, four people expressed interest. Rod posted again: “Make it happen then...Bring your instruments and play...Their is a donations jug there” [sic].

Christian Young replied several minutes later:
Anyone who is interested in doing this meet me at the maple leaf at 7:30. I'll have an acoustic with me, so if you don't have one no worries, though I don't have a tuner, but we can wing it. So, yeah, Rod is right. Let's do this ourselves. 7:30 at the leaf. That's only a half an hour away, so get on it. Hopefully see someone there.

The event happened and drew 20-30 people at any given time. Aaron Corbett posted his thanks on the board: “thanks to everyone that came out and thanks to the leaf staff for giving us a wiked fun night...we'll most likley do it again in the future..” The familiarity which the people involved have of each other aided the event as it became as much about a group of friends looking for something to do on Sunday night rather than playing a show to grow an audience or plug a record.

The prevalence of CBLocals impacted other methods of promoting shows. For example, during a typical walk in industrial Cape Breton during the summer of 2006, I observed the telephone poles to see how many posters were being used to promote events. The downtown area of Sydney was still very prominent for promoting bar show events. Every single telephone pole was riddled with the staples promoting past events alongside posters for shows at the Upstairs, Bunker's and the Maple Leaf. The Downfall cleverly tried to bring in visiting motorcyclists for a convention with posters across the downtown area reading “Bikers like the Downfall.” The House of Rock put posters in local stores and on telephone poles reminding local residents that its bands would soon be taking on the rest of Canada with national tour dates.

Outside of the downtown area, the postering was sparser. Postering for AA shows were scattered about the Glace Bay and Sydney River areas. One guitarist felt the Internet was the only venue in which people sought out shows: “People have become dependent on the
Internet…people who are going to AA shows, I can’t see (how else) they’d find out about it, really.” A veteran of both AA and bar shows suggested that while posters were necessary, one no longer needed to spend a significant amount of money to produce a lot of them:

(Some promoters) get big coloured posters that they don’t need because, really…one Locals post and one poster in every school will do the job. You could easily delegate the tasks among your band…‘you— make a poster, you— make a Locals post.’

This logic concerned others in the scene for multiple reasons. One was that other forms of promotion could attract new people into the scene that otherwise did not scour the Internet looking for shows. One late-teen and early-20s users noticed that the number of posters advertising shows had dwindled. He felt that more people needed to follow the lead of his friends that used the messageboard as conduit to help with the postering:

I think every show should have a poster…usually every show does but not every promoter is as passionate about getting people to do postering. I know some people, they go on the messageboard and they’ll ask. They say “I need 10 people.” They’ll get 10 people, they’ll do postering and they’ll have a great show…they need to get more promotion in the high schools...that should be somewhere they should be promoting.

Another argued that the scene was losing part of its artistic appeal: the art of postering. To promote their Thursday July shows, The Downfall postered the downtown area with images of clowns, encouraging patrons to join the “rock and roll circus.” For this interviewee, the Downfall’s creativity was sadly becoming the exception and not the rule:
Shows are really frequent now but I find there's almost no posters. I like what the Downfall is doing, promoting their series of shows at Bunker's, there seems to be a theme involved. Most bands just put it on the website that they're playing. And if they do posterling, there's less thought put into the poster, I find.

Others celebrated the work ethic that went into posterling and fondly reminisced about the work that went into covering the sprawl of industrial Cape Breton. Make no mistake about it, they told me, promoting a show before the Internet required effort. They told stories of having to trek across industrial Cape Breton to put up posters in the various areas. Traveling from Glace Bay to New Waterford and Dominion to Sydney to North Sydney and Sydney Mines could constitute an entire workday’s worth of putting up posters prior to the website’s existence, as these two users remembered both as a chore but also fondly in developing pride in their role within the scene:

- We used to put up 100s of posters, drive around in the rain... drive to North Sydney with a staple gun and a bunch of posters, drop them off to your friend. Then you go to Sydney, put posters up, come back (to North Sydney) an hour later and get your staple gun back.

- Interviewee: There's an emergence of people looking for a quick fix. The music thing to me (is like) life, it's hard work! Nothing is handed to you. People aren't working hard.

Bryce: So do you think the website is breeding passiveness?

Interviewee: Yes...people want instant satisfaction...I might sound outmoded, but I'm not...we used to have to traipse from one end to the other, I don't see that anymore.
This same user also suggested that the Locals website specifically and the Internet in general had actually encouraged insularity rather than expansiveness. By only posting about shows on the Internet and not posterizing the area, the person argued, bands and promoters were not spreading awareness of their music beyond the already-present audience. I interviewed a musician who not only agreed with this sentiment but felt that shows could find an expanded audience by reaching out to other media. She understood the frustration with the local print and radio. Nevertheless, she still felt that reaching out to them was worth the effort.

Some people depend solely—thinking that if they put a show on and put it on Locals, that that’s the only avenue they have for advertisement. Whereas we know that’s not the case. I mean, posterizing is fine but that’s still not even the most reliable…for example, (there was) a metal show at the Leaf and (the promoter) put it in the Cape Breton Post. It was only a short little thing but I mean, that show packed over a hundred people in the Leaf and it could have contributed to it. The avenues are there if people are going to go ask about it.

High-profile House of Rock bands benefited from advertising for Smooth Herman’s on the local radio stations. During an interview at Jasper’s restaurant with an expatriate visitor of the website, an advertisement for a show featuring Slowcoaster aired on the commercial radio station K94. The interviewee expressed surprise not only at how Herman’s had changed in a few years and also at the idea that a band that came up through the CBLocals scene was represented in a radio advertisement.

There was no disagreement that promoting shows on CBLocals was easy. There was disagreement on whether or not this was a good thing. Some users enjoyed the ease and argued that it promoted accessibility for anyone to promote shows. Others celebrated the days gone by
when every show came with a tremendous postering effort and an attempt to contact other forms of press. Promotion may have improved, these critics concluded, but the promoters’ ethic had not.

**The Relationships Between Promoters**

What struck me as perfectly normal as a member of the community, but not as an ethnographer, was that neither the promoters nor the audience described the promoters as in competition with each other. I heard many different recollections of conflict and rare examples of competition to settle disagreements. These were exceptions that demonstrated the rule. In that regard, the users did not view the promoters as pure capitalists as it was not expected that many, if any of them, would sustain a living at promotion. Instead, it was expected as a matter of course that the promoters should act on good faith to cooperate with each other to a point for the better of the overall community.

Yet there is a history of disagreements with promoters in the scene. This has expressed itself in private conversations, on the guestbook that stayed on the website until 2003 and on the messageboard that followed. In 2008, Start the Show Promotions faced messageboard wrath over a financial dispute with Get It! Get Down!, demonstrating that little has changed in that regard. When promoters’ disagreements come to surface on the messageboard, they are exposed to the general community but this is not a great change from the days prior to the website. I had recalled from my time as a scene participant in the mid-1990s that promoter disputes were not secrets. Due to the smaller community and high level of word-of-mouth, one could easily discover who did not like whom.

Promoters expressed their grievances with each other through the lens of community rather than competition. No one remarked on how they lost or gained profit due to competition
with other promoters. In the offline environment, people involved in a number of disagreements expressed civility towards each other and admitted to differing philosophies. No matter the disagreement, no one directly referred to anyone as a competitor. Each of the following four people who had all taken turns in promotion admitted that their relationships with fellow promoters were up and down:

- There (are) always turnarounds in the relationship…they’re complete 180s because there’s no middle ground with a lot of us.
- (Another promoter) has always said you can always change things from the inside more readily than throwing rocks from the outside. I’m all about finding the biggest boulder and smashing as much glass as possible...(but) we respect each other, I hope.
- There was always some wars of words…until we all realized we’re all doing the same thing. Then it sort of levels out a bit…different opinions, maybe, but I always got along.
- I think (one) doesn’t agree with the way I do shows and I think (another) doesn’t agree with the way I do shows and I think (one) really doesn’t agree with the way (another) does shows. I think we all just have our own idea about how to go about stuff…our philosophies of how to go about shows.

One individual that had worked with a variety of promoters felt any competition would be destructive. He stressed the idea that promoters should not compete with each other but recognize that the scene could only accommodate so much activity. One of the reasons he felt inclined not to cite competition is because he noted that most of the promoters were actively doing it for a living but as a hobby:
Myself, I think (the promoters) operate all the same but they would really say that some people are in it for the money. But working with the people that are accused of being in it for the money, (they) don’t make any money (laughs)…Joe (Costello) is not making a lot of money from the shows. He’s risking a lot of money bringing some of the bands that he brings down. He might make a little bit of money…

I don’t see why (promoters) have to bicker. Most of the time they try to work out (when they have shows on the same night) but sometimes they don’t…I think that they should try to reconcile because I mean, if there’s two shows going on at the same night and they each get 20 people…if they got together, they’d split the expenses plus they’d have 40 people instead of 20 people. There’s no reason why they shouldn’t get over their differences for one night. It’s not about the promoters, it’s about the people paying six, seven dollars to get to see the band they want to see and the (away) bands being able to make enough money to get out of Cape Breton.

I interviewed two promoters that explicitly felt that the messageboard had exacerbated tensions between each other. In separate interviews, they raised the same example of what one described as a “battle royale” on the website forum over conflicting show dates and differing approaches to show organization. The promoters felt their conflict became destructive when they finally ran shows head-to-head. One of them described the fallout:

We challenged each other with shows to see who would win. I can claim a victory in attendance numbers, right? (He) can claim victory in financial outcome because he had smaller, less expensive bands…we lowballed the admission price,
both of us...throwing what to the wind? The whole idea of looking at costs and managing risks...but personalities often prevail over rationality.

The two decided to resolve their differences, believing that the competition had harmed each other’s show. Both stressed that the industrial Cape Breton area was not large enough to support two shows designed to attract a similar audience. They decided from that point forward to pool their resources whenever possible:

(We) fought, it must have been three or four months, where we were constantly at each other’s throats. And then we decided to resolve that. We decided that the two of us were acting as idiots and we resolved that on the Internet but then decided in person (as well).

The other promoter agreed that this truce began a strong cooperative effort between the two that he felt benefitted the audiences:

We actually cooperated to the point where instead (of battling), we would discuss dates in advance and if I announced a show and he got an offer on a band— he would send them to my show. Or we would try to merge them. Or if he had a show on Friday, I had a show on Saturday, then we would do a “go to the show on Friday, save $2 on Saturday” deal. Little incentives and things like that, that were co-operative.

The promoters concluded that the messageboard had a positive effect on their individual promotional efforts, but that it had provided an all-too-public forum for their disagreements. Each agreed that the single biggest step in coming to an amicable truce was their first face-to-face meeting to resolve the issue.
Promoting shows for the industrial Cape Breton area was a unique challenge. Each area within the industrial region was divided by anywhere from a 30 minute to two hour drive. The local radio stations played no local music, with the exception of a one hour program on Sunday. The absence of What’s Goin’ On and Boardwalk left promoters with no music trade to which they could turn. Still, many felt elated that the CBLocals website and forum had filled the void. They celebrated the simplicity of starting a thread on the messageboard about a show to create awareness.

Others worried that this created a lazy ethic among promoters who they felt were too easily giving up on other areas of promotion, such as postering and the local newspaper. Furthermore, promoters were reluctant to use the messageboard to discuss cooperative efforts due to the history of conflicts that both it and the guestbook had for such discussions.

I found the ambivalence was stronger in the critics as they were more apt to praise Harry Doyle for the website in one quote, only to discuss negative effects on ethic in another. “He’s had such a tremendous impact on the scene, it can’t be understated,” said one only minutes before talking about how the website had led people “to be lazy.” Everyone praised Doyle for providing the outlet but not everyone praised how the userbase relied on the outlet.

CBLOCALS, MYSPACE AND EXPANSION/CONTRACTION OF COMMUNITY

Although I am critical from a practical perspective of Connell and Gibson’s (2003) claim that scenes are “detached from a sense of locality” in the Internet age, the comment still possesses merit in terms of how users perceive community. The “CB” in CBLocals is still significant as the vast majority of visitors lives in Cape Breton or is from the area. One immediate benefit is that the website and messageboard provide a connecting point for expatriate users in an area of the country known for a high outmigration. Although these users may
become ingrained in other music scenes, they remain visible in the CBLocals scene by participating in the day-to-day conversations about CBLocals goings-on.

This excited most of my interviewees who welcomed staying in touch with their friends even when school and work beckoned them away. One interviewee remarked that when she moved to Europe, she felt like she was still “tuned in” to the issues. Furthermore, she felt just as connected to a friend that had also relocated to Europe through the Locals website. “I see him post and it’s like he’s still here, he didn’t really go away, y’know?”

Yet during the summer of 2006, another website was taking precedent in the promotion of music. This commercially-owned, internationally marketed website posed a potential threat to the privately non-commercial owned, locally targeted website. Teenage users in particular were turning to MySpace rather than CBLocals to get their music fix. This left some people feeling as though the next generation was out of tune with community building and was only focused on individual needs. MySpace, nevertheless, became an indirect part of the scene's infrastructure as residents could visit band websites to hear songs, leave comments for bands and find out about show dates in the same fashion as they did on CBLocals.

The idea of members of the music scene reaching beyond Cape Breton via the Internet predates CBLocals. A teenage Mark Black’s Just Another Teenage Anthem had a small audience from across North America. When members from the CBLocals community departed to make lives in Halifax, this marked a new era for CBLocals. Some were specifically involved with the day-to-day operation of the site such as Sean MacGillvary and Mike Slaven. With that, the Locals movement officially grew to incorporate other regions of Atlantic Canada.

There are eight geographical regions that are represented with messageboards on Locals.ca. From Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and Halifax are represented as well as Pictou County
(which currently has no corresponding website). From New Brunswick, Moncton and Fredericton are represented. The provinces of Newfoundland and PEI are also represented.

People supported the connection between CBLocals and other Locals forums and websites. CBLocals had grown into a family of Atlantic Canadian websites and awareness of the Locals sites had also spread to other parts of Canada. This allowed people to feel that some bands and performers from outside of Cape Breton also had a connection to their scene. A young musician commented, "other people outside of Cape Breton who kinda wander on...giving us exposure outside of Cape Breton. Especially now that there's a HalifaxLocals, a MonctonLocals-- it links all of Atlantic Canada together." This may have been the perception of the website, but the Internet in general also was providing people with alternative avenues to seek their specific interests, which some felt fractured the scene by genre, even as it was growing in terms of geographical outreach.

Eventually, the MonctonLocals and HalifaxLocals forums were linked on the national website stillepost.ca. Stilleposte gathers a number of regionally related music scene forums in Canada. Only one of my interviewees mentioned Stillpost; the lack of a specific CBLocals link being the most likely reason.

Once one creates an account for the Locals.ca board, s/he can visit and/or post to whichever messageboard s/he pleases. This also includes a number of other boards, such as skate.cblocals, General Discussion, General Support, Buy & Sell and Give’s a ride/couch. Since the access to the messageboards is universal, this creates a larger Locals community beyond Cape Breton. There were differing responses from users on how often they visited the other geographical forums. As cited in an earlier chapter, many users preferred the Halifax forum to the Cape Breton one for the general tone of conversation. Many only saw the purpose of visiting
the CBLocals forum since it was the most directly relevant to them. What emerged was a smaller community of users whose presence spanned across the regions. For example, Halifax user s.w.a.c. was cited by some interviewees as a memorable personality, even though he has never lived in Cape Breton. One person described a visit to Moncton in which someone introduced themselves based on her username and another described playing in a HalifaxLocals-CBLocals softball game:

- MonctonLocals is very into the messageboard. They have meet-and-greets and things like that. So I go to Moncton and (someone) comes up to me and says “Hi, I’m chappy, I PM’ed you!” And she’s actually cool and I like her. That’s happened to me a couple of times.
- It was fun. It was weird, though, the whole game, people identifying you by your username. They’d be like “oh you’re so-and-so…” and you start thinking of all of them by their usernames, you’ve got faces to go with the names, right? So now it feels a little more personal when you go on the HalifaxLocals site.

The practicality of this web of Atlantic Canadian music communities is most evident to touring bands. Re-visited the breakdown of messageboard threads during my fieldwork, 54 of the 503 threads started centered on the promotion of bands from outside of Cape Breton. Bands or promoters created accounts on locals.ca solely for the purpose of posting to messageboards to promote material, with no interest in participating in other discussion. These threads either entailed linking to mp3s or requesting a show (or both). It was (and is) common for these posters to post to multiple Locals forums to try to put together a tour of the East Coast. Most of these threads are ignored by the majority of the userbase and usually only receive one or two
responses. These posts are met with irritation from a few users although occasionally a user will suggest contacting a specific promoter or venue.

Contrarily, some acts from outside of Atlantic Canada have started accounts on Locals and actually regularly contribute to various forums in general conversation. One example is B.A. Johnston. Residing in Hamilton, Ontario, the solo artist specializes in synthesizer-based humor songs. Johnston started a Locals.ca account to find shows in Atlantic Canada in 2004. By the end of the year, he had played Sydney twice. One of the last shows I attended in the summer of 2006 was a B.A. Johnston/Windom Earle (residing in Halifax) show at the Upstairs bar. By July 2008, Johnston had posted over 800 times on Locals forums (mostly on Halifax’s board although nearly 12% of his posts were on other forums). He had also visited the East Coast three more times.

This is an example of an artist who had progressed to a degree that many associated him with the scene despite his hailing from outside the region. The buzz among the AA crowd shortly before I concluded my fieldwork was the upcoming visit from progressive metal/math rock band Protest the Hero. The Whitby, Ontario band continued to develop a large national following since first visiting the Cape Breton area in 2003 as an opening act for Closet Monster. Despite this, clearly many teenagers felt an attachment to the band as a part of the local scene.

Some of my interviewees embraced this as a positive aspect of the website and messageboard, embracing the “glocal” concept that music scholars such as Connell and Gibson (2003) put forth. As the website was now so strongly connected to their vision of what the “scene” was, these people were willing to concede that you could be from outside Cape Breton but still be part of the community. This was evident when they commented on if an outside band still “qualified” as “a CBLocals band”, as these two interviewees did:
- CBLocals band...it could be anything really. It could be somebody from Ontario or it could be somebody who was originally in Cape Breton but are located somewhere else and half their band’s from a different place but they're still considered partly Cape Breton or a CBLocals band because they're involved with the website.

- If you're part of the Locals, then you're welcome with open arms...when bands from Halifax that are associated with HalifaxLocals come and play in Cape Breton, people know to go see them.

Promoters unsurprisingly embraced this element of the website as well as they valued continuing relationships with bands from across Atlantic Canada. “I like reading the other boards,” one commented, “check in and see what’s going there, what they’re doing, what they’re thinking, if there’s any bands that I’d like to bring here.”

However, ironically, I saw very little of Atlantic Canadian music during my fieldwork other than the local musicians. Instead, Ontario and Western Canadian were the prevailing trend. This was partially because of the prevailing screamo/emo trend that emanated from those areas, particularly southern Ontario. It was also because even though promoters and interviewees championed the connection to other Locals sites, bands were instead contacting promoters— AA promoters at least— through MySpace rather than just through Locals.

On July 30, the Western Canadian band Billy & the Lost Boys headlined an AA show in Sydney River. Billy began her banter with the audience by sharing the same observation she did with the small group of people that greeted her when she arrived. “Are Sydney shows always this awesome? Because if they are, you’re really lucky!” she remarked with a reasonable amount of conviction. She then shared her understanding of the generational divide during her solo set at
Bunker’s before a sparse audience. She remarked about one of her songs, “if you want to listen to it, you have to go to MySpace…..sorry!!”

Billy announced that she had a MySpace page apologetically, as though she was embarrassed to be posting her music on the website. It seemed as though everyone I was encountering—at shows, during interviews—was mentioning the prevalence of MySpace for promoting music. Despite its prevalence, everyone viewed it with suspicion. Violent Theory drummer DJ Vaters plugged the band’s “website” at a “Battle of the Bands” show at the Savoy theatre—with a caveat. “It’s not really our website, it’s that MySpace trendy thing,” he offered to the crowd with a derisive chuckle.

MySpace is a social networking site that is also used to promote music. It started in 2003 as a small networking website in the United States. It is free for use and features advertising for music, movies and television. Users create profiles for themselves and then add “friends” to increase their network. Users display their interests and can interact with each other to meet new people or simply keep in touch with old friends. Bands can upload mp3 sound files to the website for listeners as well as update the site with tour dates or links for album purchases.

Media firm News Corp. purchased MySpace for more than $500 million U.S. in 2005. By the summer of 2006, it was the sixth most popular website on the World Wide Web (Perkins, 2006) and its use increased by 167 percent in one year (“Exploring MySpace,” 2006). Since 2005, MySpace have allowed bands and music artists to create their own official MySpace page with streaming audio and MP3s for download. Other businesses are involved—fast-food chains, radio stations and studios creating profiles for each of their movies (p. D01).

In the month of August alone, 61 individual users posted comments on Drowning Shakespeare’s MySpace page. 58 did so for Richmond Hill’s MySpace page. Teenage
promoters Start the Show and Joe Costello’s Under the Underground had started their MySpace pages to promote events whereas older promoters aiming at bar audiences such as Rod Gale, House of Rock and Darryl MacKinnon were resisting the MySpace movement. In short, AA promoters were already hip to MySpace, the bar promoters were resistant to the phenomenon.

MySpace picked up the slack that CBLocals had left in the multimedia department. CBLocals once hosted a number of audio files of various bands but had ceased updating this material in 2002. (By 2008, the entire audio archive disappeared.) Conversely, MySpace was emerging as a place for bands to place their mp3s free of charge for a listener’s perusing. MySpace had originally emerged as a social networking site but now had grown to also include a place where people checked out their favorite bands and found new ones. You do not necessarily need an account to check out music content on MySpace, but one is needed for the networking functions such as messaging and forum access. The website features all of the networking tools associated with the Internet: a messaging function, forums and eventually a chat feature.

The owners of MySpace can afford to provide more web space and multimedia tools due to its heavy amount of corporate funding. By the fall of 2006, web journalist Trent Lapinski wrote an online article laying out the history of the website. He demonstrated that MySpace was founded by eUniverse, rather than organically grown from a number of users without capital concern. He argued that MySpace evolved from Friendster users who wanted to use a Friendster template “with the focus on commerce rather than networking” (Mitchell, 2006, C5).

Lapinski’s history quelled any interpretations of MySpace as an organic Internet phenomenon focused on community whose capitalistic benefits occurred by accident. He sought to debunk the implication that “if a few people could bring millions of users together in one
networking site, anyone else could do so just as easily.” CBLocals was the locally developed, capital-free website and the younger users appeared to be migrating away from it. One of my teenage interviewees used CBLocals but was more enthusiastic in describing the benefits of MySpace:

MySpace is so huge now…it came out of nowhere. It’s funny…when you click on a link to a band or when you look on posted band websites, I guarantee 80-90% of the time, it starts with “www.myspace.com” and then there’s a slash. Like, 80-90% of the time. I think MySpace is great for that. I think MySpace is an amazing thing. It’s doing a lot for music and exposure for music.

Younger bands and promoters within the CBLocals scene continued to use MySpace as a primary point of organizing shows whereas using the CBLocals website, e-mail or telephone appeared to be secondary functions. Richmond Hill and Drowning Shakespeare were incorporating this tool to network with other bands to put together their Eastern Canadian tours. One of the more experienced members of the AA scene noticed how teenage promoters and bands were relying heavily on MySpace in their promotional efforts: "The Start the Show guys…they mainly book bands through MySpace...Drowning Shakespeare just posts bulletins (on MySpace) and they get (tour)dates...there's some pros where you can contact whoever you want, pretty much."

18 of the 32 billed local acts during my fieldwork time had already put music up on a MySpace page. Over the course of the following year, five of the remaining 14 had broken up and six others started up MySpace pages. The remaining acts were solo artists who played 3-4 shows a year. Despite the overwhelming use of MySpace by bands to promote their music, a vocal minority of CBLocals users felt that MySpace’s popularity was already dissipating.
Moreover, they saw limits to how many bands could be recruited from away to come to Cape Breton via MySpace, as two different interviewees specified:

- (There's a) hardcore band from Mexico...it's like screamo: but in Mexican. I have 'em on my MySpace...it's cool (but) I would never ever talk to that guy in (person) y'know what I mean?

- I get add requests from bands all the time and I'll be like, "no!" I won't listen, I'll just look at it...if they're from the States, I'm usually not interested at all 'cause I won't see them anytime and there's no point in adding them to my friends...it's a marketing tool, that's what it is. Some other website will come along that's somewhat better and people will use that...people will get tired of it and then move on to another website.

Older promoters were also dubious about how much MySpace could be used to promote music scenes as opposed to just musical projects. One person argued that MySpace left him feeling like a victim of technological developments and he did not like it. He had visited the website but had yet to start up his own user account but he realized that this would likely change.

I don't like MySpace. I know, though, that sooner or later, I’m going to have to get a MySpace. It’s inevitable. It’s quickly becoming the standard. I don’t like it because I don’t think it promotes community, but it’ll quickly get to where if you don’t have one, people won’t know what you’re doing.

One of the users that chided the new generation of promoters for decreasing work ethic also chided MySpace. He felt that the allure of starting a website that was available internationally with just a few clicks of a mouse was distracting users from doing the grassroots work that would help them as musical acts. It particularly annoyed him when bands from
outside Cape Breton asked for shows on the merits of their MySpace page: “I get emails all the time from people wanting to play here…and they’ll be like ‘check out our MySpace’ and I’ll be like, ‘Great…have you played any shows?’ and they’ll go ‘no, but we have a MySpace!’” He looked at me with disgust and concluded “Everybody thinks they’re a fuckin’ rock star now!”

As I conducted a few more interviews in the summer of 2007, a new social networking site—Facebook—had emerged as the favorite in the Locals community. This was representative of a greater North American trend: in the summer of 2007, Facebook was adding 150,000 users a day (Crow, 2007). Industry insiders also reported sharp drops for MySpace in light of this event (Davidson, 2007). A Toronto Star survey claimed that Canadian accounts on Facebook increased by over 600% in 2007 (Sorenson, 2007). Facebook’s history and layout differed from MySpace in a number of respects. Whereas MySpace began with a corporate plan, Facebook began in Harvard dormitories. MySpace included multimedia for bands to promote themselves where Facebook was still limiting its function to individual social networking (while still featuring ads and various applications for individual users to apply).

One of my 2007 interviewees felt that although Facebook and MySpace each experienced flourishes of popularity, CBLocals was the permanent location of the community.

As a social networking tool, Facebook has a lot more opportunities…it seems like me, and many other people, have pretty much ditched their MySpaces and they’re relatively inactive, totally inactive or deleted…it’s only a matter of time before somebody replicates (Facebook) and then adds 16 more things to it and makes it flashier and a little bit more updated and all of a sudden: Facebook is old news and no one utters the word…whereas I don’t see anyone coming in to compete directly with CBLocals and say “I can better represent the CBLocals music scene
and I can offer this and this and this that CBLocals can’t” because …the people who are loyal and who are daily active members of the CBLocals forum, or the website, are not looking for an alternative…I think (people) have the desire to contribute to what already exists.

Promoters and bands continued to use MySpace alongside, rather than as a replacement, for CBLocals activity. The use of other websites and online tools to supplement CBLocals was nothing new as IRC had been a crucial part of developing the CBLocals community during the website’s infancy, as one user recalled:

There was the IRC channel, CBLocals, things like that...that was my main point of communication...around, I would say ’95 to ’98. That's when the only way you could find out what was going on on the weekend was to go on IRC and, y'know, there would be parties for people...back then it was (a chatroom called) TeenPoolParty but it eventually became CBLocals (chatroom). That's the only way you'd find out what was going on. That or CBLocals.

So I made a correlation: whereas teenagers relied on IRC to buffer their use of CBLocals in the late 1990s, teenagers could use MySpace to buffer their use of CBLocals in 2006.

However, it seemed plausible from attending the shows that the opposite might be true. I was unsuccessful in recruiting many teenage volunteers for my project. The divide between the generations had increased and I had moved from Sydney in 2003. The teenage showgoers viewed me with suspicion— an interloper nearly in his 30s intruding on a social territory almost exclusively reserved for teenagers and a handful of participants in their 20s. Using my handful of connections within the AA scene, I managed to accumulate a list of contacts but received only a handful of responses when I followed up. One of my connections concluded that the AA
community gravitated away from the CBLocals page and thus felt reluctant to participate even on an email basis.

Ironically, some interviewees generally associated the word “CBLocals” with only the AA scene. This is most likely due to the fact that they immediately associated the word with the messageboard and thus with the recent disputes that poorhaus had with various teenage posters. Nevertheless, despite perceptions from interviewees that were no longer attending AA shows, most of the teenagers at these shows were either attaching less importance to the website than the preceding generation or avoiding the site altogether, as one member of the scene stressed in an interview:

You gotta look at the messageboard as 30-40 people, 5-6 of whom go to shows on a regular basis. And considering there’s probably anywhere from 60-250 people at shows at any one time, five or six people who actually go to shows on a regular basis is a very small portion of the people who actually go to shows all the time. So you can’t really judge our music scene based upon what you see on this Internet messageboard or this Internet website because a high degree of users of the music scene that go to shows, that go and buy stuff, go see bands and enjoy themselves so aren’t involved in this website and on this messageboard.

While the preference of MySpace over CBLocals reflected how the generation gap was displayed online, it remains to be seen whether it will permanently remove the sense of geographical space online. By 2008, Facebook had firmly supplanted MySpace in individual users’ popularity although MySpace remained the website of choice to put up MP3s. Facebook event links have now been activated for some of the events on the CBLocals sidebar. IRC has met its decline, MySpace appears to be declining somewhat and the jury is out on Facebook. In
2006, an unidentified user created a MySpace page for CBLocals itself. By the end of the year, the user stopped updating it and it currently lies dormant.

The outreach of the Locals website was much praised but from my immediate viewing, it was underutilized. Even though there were highly active communities just clicks away on the Locals forum, teenagers were more attuned to Ontario bands contacting promoters via MySpace. This concerned older users that felt disconnected from MySpace.

As I cited in Chapter 1, the CBLocals website has declined steadily in activity since my fieldwork. In three years, the number of unique visitors per month dropped from 11,240 to 3,566. The messageboard remains as active as it did in 2006 in terms of the number of threads that are active per day (between 15-20 per day). This suggests that people may be turning away from the promotional element of CBLocals— the main website itself— but retaining the community element that they find on the messageboard. This is merely speculation as it is also possible that users are simply turning to the messageboard for all of their needs as this trend was already developing in 2006.

The Internet provided mobility for the scene but the mobility of the individual users to migrate to MySpace had made it a double-edged sword. Most concluded that MySpace was a great way to promote your band. However, they still yearned for a town-hall model of the Internet for their music scene, which they felt that CBLocals fulfilled. These users were coming to terms with the fact that the incoming generation did not seem to be seeking out this model.

CBLOCALS AS A MEANS OF INTERACTION

It scares me when people will get together in real life, face-to-face, and talk about what somebody said on the Internet. I guess that’s the way of
the future…the near-future— as in the present. I don’t like it and I don’t
know if I’ll ever be able to accept it.

- A young user describes the habits of his peers in the scene.

If you wouldn’t say it in conversation, you shouldn’t say it on the boards
because you’d be held responsible socially…it should be a representation
of real life.

- An admin describes his vision of CBLocals

“Are you cutting people up? ‘Cause I’m in!,” enthusiastically chimed a new patron as
she eavesdropped on a public conversation at June 2006 Bunker's show. In fact, the group I was
in was talking about Sean MacGillivary’s actions on the messageboard, the users that supported it
and the users that it had alienated. “The board is totally chill now,” one person concluded, “I
think Sean cleaned it up pretty good.” I noticed that the conversation fizzled out upon that
conclusion; as if the people in the conversation were hoping to discuss some conflict, but instead
had agreed that there was not much to talk about at that moment in time.

These moments were rare. While teenagers were largely preoccupied with their
MySpaces, the messageboard was subject to much informal conversation at bars. Messageboard
“spats” were often the source of gossip, namely Sean’s grievance with multiple CBLocals users
but also arguments between morgan and Rod Gale or joe’s disputes with other musicians over
the loss of AA venues.

This type of gossip provided for social lubrication within the scene. It was obvious that
this was an attractive feature as people enjoyed discussing their opinions on the scene and its
direction. However, simultaneously, people spoke of the messageboard with the same
embarrassment that Billy from Billy & the Lost Boys had spoken of MySpace. In my interviews,
a common thread of thought was “I don’t know why I go to the messageboard, but I always do.” The messageboard was a classic case of fatal attraction. The same signal-to-noise quality described earlier in this chapter drew them to the board like moths to the flame.

Many argued that there were practical consequences to the Internet arguments beyond affecting to the signal-to-noise ratio. Later in this section, I discuss the users contradictory embracing and dismissal of humor and putdowns on the CBLocals messageboard. While users embraced what they viewed as entertaining arguments, they also lamented the Internet did not provide the right context for such arguments, leaving many disillusioned with perceived negativity of the scene. In the following section, I discuss how the metal scene was associated with messageboard bickering and how this created a negative impression of a community of bands that contributed to the scene.

“Why is the Metal Scene Getting Screwed Over?”

It was July 2, 2006 at St. Mark’s Hall. Athymia was one of several bands opening for Fuck the Facts, a self-described “Canadian Bastardized Hardcore” band from Ottawa, Ontario. The setup was anything but epic for a genre that prides itself on volume and technical virtuosity: a couple of amplifiers faced out towards the spacious hall with a few dozen teenagers. Even though there was a stage in St. Mark’s Hall, the Start the Show promoters elected not to use it, placing the bands on the floor right in front of the spectators. The drummer for Fuck the Facts warmed up for his set even as Athymia was playing. Most of the observers of the set, like Athymia themselves, showed a predilection for wearing black.

Since the room was so spacious, there was plenty of room in the back for a merchandise table which the traveling band used to its advantage. Adorning the table were a number of CDs bedecked in highly stylized, sometimes almost impossible to read, lettering. I learned that this
was a staple for heavy metal bands, particularly subgenres such as doom or death metal. CDs featured include such bands such as Dark Day Rising, Porno Coma, Disarm, Fetus Aftermath and the Murdersquad. Consistent with that dark theme, Matt Canova, frontman for the five-piece Athymia, announced the title of the band’s next song. He gradually dropped his voice to what is known as the “death growl” amongst metal fans: “This next song is called the….sea-of-HAAAAAAATTTTTEEEEEEEE!!”

The crowd for the band dropped off slightly to 20-30 people as the set progressed. The energy level did not correspond to the enthusiasm of the band. A few solitary audience members remained standing still but banged their heads in approval of the local metal practitioners. Before finishing up, Matt reminded the audience of the band’s website and told them a CD was in the works. The next local band was Violent Theory— with a considerable metal influence but described by most in my correspondence as a cross between punk and metal. They drew a considerably larger audience to the front of the room and by the time they hit their second song, 50-60 people were already congregated. The paid attendance for this show did not reach 100, which is less than what a Richmond Hill or Drowning Shakespeare show attracted during my observation.

Heavy metal has held the status of a popular subgenre in the CBLocals scene since the early 1990s. In that time, few shows usually featured metal bands and those that did usually only featured one. Bands such as Dark Waters, Otalla and Room 217 were exceptions to the rule; punk, grunge and “indie-rock” bands were predominant in the scene.

Metal bands were not the biggest draws at AA shows, but their following at bar shows was nearly impossible to track in the summer of 2006. Metal bands playing at a bar shows was such a rarity that I only saw one bar show during the entire summer where a band considered
metal by some users appeared. One self-described metal musician admitted that there were limited examples of metal bands at bar shows but saw hope for the future.

Interviewee: AA, more people tend to show up. I guess havin’ metal bands at bars isn’t a real popular thing. If Slowcoaster plays at Herman’s, it's gonna be packed but I wouldn’t say if (we) played at Herman’s, it’d be a big crowd (laughs)
Bryce: Do you foresee that changing?
Interviewee: I would hope so. We've played at the Leaf a couple of times, the first time it wasn’t too big a crowd (but the second time) was a huge crowd, the place was packed.

Metal fans stand out as a strong subculture within the CBLocals community. The attitude towards metal in 2006 was largely shaped by the CBLocals messageboard. It was on this forum that discontent towards the music scene emanated from a number of people associated with the metal scene. The fact that the term “metal scene” had any currency was telling in and of itself—no other people within the scene aside from the occasional hip hop poster used a genre to describe the community with which they associated.

A variety of users identified as instigators on the board were also identified as fans of various forms of heavy metal, such as Dropkick Tompkins, Jeffolation, x.Tombstone.x, Diamond Cross and Canovatone. As such, one of the people with administrative and moderating powers within the Locals website associated heavy metal fans with discontent, even dating back to the early 2000 guestbook days when teenage promoter Eli Richards would often clash with Undertone:

(The guestbook) was getting progressively rotten with the metalheads. And people attacking the metalheads on and off, the metalheads were getting up-in-
arms, defensive…here we go again— again…I find a lot of guys in the metal community when they started being in their bands, they found out about Locals and started posting (on the messageboard). They got a lukewarm response and assumed the world was against them. And that there was no metal scene…getting real defensive about everything. That pisses me off, (people) saying “you like punk, everybody hates metal” and blah blah blah, whine whine whine. Why? I don’t get it! They don’t listen to anybody that reasons, they are just stuck in that…they’ve convinced themselves that "they’re not represented the way they’d like to be represented” (equals) “everybody’s out to get them.”

The “everybody’s out to get them” line represented the tension that existed in a lowly populated area that had managed to create a music scene large enough to accommodate local rock shows, but not large enough to divide the shows genre-wise. One metal musician had taken various sides of the debate during his time on the messageboard. In 2006, he claimed the frustration on behalf of the metal community had less to do with any one individual but with the lack of people to support the scene the fans really wanted:

The bills all have to be split, you gotta keep everybody happy so everybody will come…(I wish) there was a way to put on an all-metal show and actually make money here…they have metal shows in Halifax and it’s a great success. There’s enough metalheads around there to actually have 100-150-200 people go to the show and see it and have a blast…if everybody goes to a metal show because they like metal, everybody’s going to be your best friend!

However, in his 2007 interview, a user agreed with the admin/moderator's complaints when it came to some metal users of CBLocals. A promoter was accused of backing out of
organizing a show at the last minute. A user responded with frustration about how this affected musicians within the metal community. The musician argued that metal users were quick to point out what adversely affected metal bands rather than what adversely affected the scene as a whole:

A lot of people think of me as a metal hater, but I just kinda hate people who kinda stick to their thing and say if anything bad happens to them, it’s bad. If it's not (them), "who cares?" The recent argument about (a promoter who) backed out and didn’t tell any of the bands. It seemed to me that the metal bands took it as an attack on them. If the screamo bands got attacked in it, they wouldn’t have said as much. They only stuck up for their bands...every time a little thing happens to the metal bands, it (becomes) “why is the metal scene getting screwed over?” But those things happen to every band.

Threads discussing "metal wars" appeared periodically on the messageboard from 2005-2007, but they have been much more sporadic in recent years. At the time, website founder Harry Doyle started a thread titled "My thoughts on the metal wars," in which he argued that metal fans’ confrontational ways were doing more harm to their cause than good. He also cited infighting, such as disputes over what constituted a metal band, as needless and surpassing “the pretentiousness of any sort of indie rock pompousness i have ever heard of.” x.Tombstone.x apologized for his role in several arguments but also argued that more harsh snobbery surrounding metal music awaited fans outside Cape Breton. He laid this out in a messageboard response:

if any metal band plans on going bigger then cape breton you better realize that the rest of the world is alot meaner when it comes to this genre then anyone on
cblocals could ever be. If you're going to claim something you better know you're shit or these people won't even bother looking at your cd. They will boycott your cds for years on major global metal groups. This is no joke, the key to success in metal lately is due to yes "the internet" & they will tear you apart no matter how nice you were to your local music scene.

(Posted on the CBLocals board: Fri May 25, 2007 2:19 pm)

The thread eventually turned into a series of one-liners (basically a flame war) and segued into a discussion critical of Nazism in punk and metal. Most of the users—identified as metal fans or not—posting concurred with Harry and x.Tombstone.x’s sentiments. This appeared to quell the infighting within the metal community as well as the criticisms that the metal fans were too sensitive.

In this instance, messageboard discussion had increased visibility of the sense of genre identity that proliferated the scene. One user lamented that these issues had existed for a long time—the metal scene had long been a popular genre within CBLocals that some musicians felt was under promoted—but that the messageboard was not constructive in resolving the problems:

Back in the day, if you had a problem, you would talk it out face-to-face...instead, I think if you put it on a messageboard, it just comes out wrong, someone reads something wrong and it just escalates. As opposed to meeting, having a coffee, and hashing out the problem.

It was equally perplexing to this interviewee that the metal musicians did not form a separate website to constructively deal with the problems. This returned me to the quote of a metal musician who said of CBLocals, “it’s the cool place to be, I suppose,” conceding that even
though a strictly metal website could resolve some of his discontent, it would remove him from the community.

**Mixed Feelings about morgan, Humor and Gossip**

During a solo acoustic set at the Cedar's Club, Christian Young, frontman for Jedi Mind Trick remarked upon his hat: “I got this from my homosexual Grade 1 friend, RJ!,” He referred to the heterosexual RJ Good who, along with a crowd of 20-30 people, took the riff in good humor even though a similar jibe might have gotten Christian banned from the Locals messageboard.

It was not uncommon to see and hear people at various shows telling each other, alternately, to "fuck right off" or "fuck off." In fact, I learned that, much like when I grew up in the scene, sarcastically contentious comments for humor purposes were common to the area. Airport's Aaron Corbett would often “heckle” one of his friends in another band with a “go fuck yourself!” or an equally obscene insult. It was never taken seriously by the receiver of the quip. Musicians would point this at themselves and at their audience. During an AA show at North Sydney's Ed's Indoor Play, Dylan Mombourquette responded to the feedback of the crowd with typical self deprecation: “Fuck you, don’t ever clap again! This band sucks!”

This type of banter was not just relegated to offline communication. Users would often go online and banter and jab at each other good naturedly on the messageboard. However, with a precedent set that poking fun at each other was "OK," it became confusing when actual arguments would break out on the messageboard. If one person lobbed an insult at the other person's expense, was it good humor or detrimental to the community. If it was the latter, what justified other people using such humor? My interviewees were divided between seeing the
board as a hostile place and seeing it as a place where sarcasm and humor did not travel well, thus leaving users feeling like there was confrontation where there was none.

I gained insight into what attracted users to the board by discussing who their favorite and most hated users were. However, it was not the favored choices that told the biggest story. Certain users were identified as favorites for offering articulate insight (hitokiri), providing topical content (joe) or offering wisdom from experience (D-A-R-Y-L). Others were singled out as negative for lacking substantive content (bobsagetismylover), rehashing tired subjects (Glennard) or being spiteful (Jeffolation, Jimmy). However, there was one user and— and seemingly one user alone— who produced a polarizing reaction among my interview sample: morgan, identified by users as Morgan Currie. One user was not sure if she liked morgan or not, but knew one thing: “If I see morgan’s name at the end of a (thread), I’m always gonna read it.”

morgan was involved in several rivalries within the scene, both on and off the board. He and Rod Gale had clashed online in a number of threads and neither expressed an interest in being in the other’s company offline. In one thread, Rod Gale explicitly stated he had been interested in attending a show until discovering Tom Fun (in which the identified user plays) was on the bill. His barbs with James FW were cited by mutual friends. morgan’s supporters cited intelligence and wittiness as his biggest assets on the messageboard, as these two interviewees did:

- morgan's intelligent and he has witty things to say and he actually looks at what's going on and makes a decision on what he's going to say based on the previous thread...he'll make his jokes and digs based on stuff that actually happened. He makes informed ridicules of other people. Whereas Jeffolation just
says "you look emo, look at your haircut, I hate you, you wear tight pants, you must be a homosexual, which is a bad thing."

- Usually, he's cutting somebody up with good reason…I’m saying what he says about a lot of other people is well-founded and they are in fact douchebags and stuff like that (laughs)

Critics felt that morgan came across as too snide. Even some of his supporters admitted as much ("I’ve had to try and stop him from (verbally) eviscerating people,” said one) but others were more pointed in their criticism. What was interesting is that most of the comments reflected a respect for the user's musical talent and intelligence, but an acknowledgement of an online persona— one they did not like.

- He's a smart guy, talented as all-hell, but he always seems pretentious. I don't know, I just don't click with him, I think.

- I'm not someone to judge someone really quickly. But just from reading what he types, man he can really piss me off! (laughs)

- I really do not like Morgan Currie's Internet persona. Because he's never wrong. He does not admit to ever being wrong and even beyond that, anything computer or Internet related, he'll be hyper-critical of...but I don't dislike the guy. I just think his Internet persona is of that of a "know it all." And I don't think that serves him or anybody on the board well.

The mixed feelings surrounding morgan were emblematic of the mixed emotions that users felt about the use of humor in an online community. morgan’s most memorable contributions to the messageboard had been his deconstructions of critics’ arguments, complete with subtle and not-so-subtle jokes at the user’s expense. When Dropkick Tompkins started a
thread stating his exasperation with both the music scene and poorhaus’ moderation of the board, morgan replied with a mix of humor and commentary. I found this response (truncated for formatting purposes) to be representative of his communicative style online:

Dropkick Tompkins wrote:

As much as everyone is trying, I still don't think the scene will ever be for me what it was when I first got into it.

Either will playgrounds or waterslides. It's called growing up.

Dropkick Tompkins wrote:

Joe, kudos on keeping the AA scene alive and well, my only complaint is that even though mixed bills are good ways of getting numbers for shows and breaking even (hell, it's probably the only way to break even) BUT it's like a high-school fucking dance sometimes. A buncha kids standing around with their arms crossed watching some band from Southern Ontario.

This has been going on for years. Like, before you even knew what pop-punk was. Even when I was a wee teen, lots of shows were like this. Some people (myself included) like to stand around and listen, and don't always feel like running around in circles punching each other.

Dropkick Tompkins wrote:

The show costed about $7-$8 and there's about 1-2 bands worthwhile. I'm poor and don't really want to waste my money that way (funny how everything kinda comes back to money... you know like making a lot of money so you can pay these shitty bands).
You can't please everyone all the time, since people have varied tastes. If bet if you liked every band at every show, someone else would hate every band at every show. The world doesn't revolve around you.

*Dropkick Tompkins wrote:*

*In retrospect, it's nazis like Poorhaus who won't allow people like myself say what i want to say. I's got a right to say what's I wants.*

I think, again, you're blowing things out of proportion. But if what you wanna say is "you're a fag", then you missed the point of way too many of those NOFX songs you've probably considered covering.

*(Posted on CBLocals board: Fri Jun 23, 2006 7:39 pm)*

The reason that users felt ambiguous towards morgan was twofold. On the one hand, his deconstruction of posts led him to conflict with a great number of users. However, he also revealed the complex relationship that users have with humor on the board. For example, morgan’s NOFX comment was likely interpreted by his supporters as an “informed dig” on the musical styling of Tompkins, whereas his critics likely found it a snide and unnecessary putdown.

One admin differentiated between what he felt was witty “verbal volleying” and mean-spirited commenting. He felt that the CBLocals community suffered because not enough people made the same distinction:

*I value (verbal volleying); I think it’s a very useful skill. I think that…I don’t know, CBLocals, the volleying happens but it’s not very articulate. In HalifaxLocals, it’s just not as antagonistic, so there’s not as much of it but when it*
happens, it’s more articulate and a lot more good-natured. But the whole nature of *kinda* meaning it, like, and doing it really well: I don’t think it’s super-valued.

This commentary was supported by a user who professed enjoying HalifaxLocals more because “even when they’re being stupid, they’re still being entertaining.” The musician felt that morgan, and also poorhaus, were exceptions to the rule. Another person preferred the commentary of one of morgan’s frequent critics:

- I guess I do admire morgan. I think he's a wicked guy and I think his… I find what he writes intelligent and funny. I mean: really scathingly funny. Same for Sean MacGillvary (poorhaus). I would love for there to be more jerks for them to fight because I would love to read it because I think they're wicked.
- James (F.W.) usually makes a good jerk (laughs). Some people can be really smart and some people can open their mouths when they shouldn't but that's something I wouldn't judge the whole site by.

The lack of a shared sense of humor led to conflicts: one person’s joke was another person’s insult. Some users found little humor in either James F.W. or morgan. One person commented on a 2005 thread on headsets in which the two disagreed. A sampling includes morgan stating “headsets are for pop-singers that dance around and disney butt-boys like phil collins” and James F.W. retorting morgan’s comment that he was not too funny for a comedian with “That would be like saying, ‘Hey Morgan, that last burn of yers had no bass-lines in it! I thought you were a bass-player!’ or something equally ridiculous.” Said the critic of the two, “they start out talking about headsets but then it’s just the two of them trying to outwit other and it’s like, ‘c’mon guys, this is going nowhere.’”
The conclusion that many users reached was that "sarcasm doesn't travel well on the Internet." I heard this phrase used by more than one interviewee. It was a contradiction: people would talk about their love of humor from a favourite user on the board, then talk about their disdain for the mean-spiritedness of a user someone else found amusing. For the musician that thought James was a "good jerk," it took a pre-existing knowledge of users before you joined the community online to fully understand the "put downs":

The thing is, if I know the actual person...like, nobody likes (Glennard) on the messageboard. But in person? I have a good time with him. He's a nice guy; I went to school with him for six years. I like the guy. But on the messageboard, I take everything he says with a grain of salt because I know him in person and I know that in person that he wouldn't say things as dumb as he says on the (messageboard)...I'm sure if I didn't know James F.W. in person, I'd probably dislike him on the messageboard. You can't be as much of a jerk in person, you'd make enemies a lot faster that way.

"I find a lot of people avoid the messageboard just to get rid of the drama," concluded another musician, "text can only do so much...sarcasm is so lost on the Internet...people will instinctively think (someone else) is a dirtbag." Another interviewee confessed that she "lurked a lot" because the bickering "makes people feel like...you'll get cut to shreds just for saying something." A former promoter argued that much of the "cutting up" on the board came from teens and, moreover, the teens that felt they comprised a disenfranchised minority of the scene. "Kids aren't so inclined to provide all of the qualifications to back up (what they say) or even, in many cases, don't even have the capacity developmentally to provide any rational basis for what they're saying," he argued, stating their communication skills would likely improve with age.
An early 20s musician felt that the most destructive element of the messageboard was its potential to dissuade the *youngest* potential audience members from joining the community. Using the metal musicians in the scene as an example, she argued that these people were mild-mannered offline, but a newcomer might not get that impression from the forum. Thus, s/he might back away from attending shows:

Say there's this 12 year old kid...and he's like 'man, I've heard about this CBLocals thing, I've seen it on a few posters, maybe I'll be totally into this because y'know, I like Alexisonfire, I like that kinda music which is trendy now but was also underground, so it works. So he goes on the messageboard and the first message is "DIE ALL YOU EMO CHILDREN!" He'll say "there's absolutely no way I'm going to (another) show because I'm going to get hurt by these big metal guys!"...that's why it bothers me so much...because that's not what it's like at all. (At a show) these guys are not going to acknowledge your existence or they're just gonna say "hey what's up?"...I hate the idea of kids getting afraid of something that basically made my junior high or high school life because they're afraid of getting hurt because they like Drowning Shakespeare.

Still, the same user confessed: "I find out about all sorts of interesting stuff on the messageboard...including all the interesting gossip on the scene!"

I found users would contract themselves, talking about how the bickering on the messageboard was their least favourite feature on the board while simultaneously discussing the multiple times they visited it to "keep up with the gossip." "I can't help myself," professed one, "I don't know, I guess I'm addicted!" Another lamented, "I go there to see if there any messageboard fights...it's terrible, I know. But entertaining."
**Better Off with the Guestbook?**

An interesting minority opinion was that the guestbook had been better for the website and community than the current messageboard. The CBLocals guestbook was one posting board for anyone visiting the website that ran for 20 posts (or 100 if users wanted to see more) in chronological order from most recent to oldest. Since there was no thread and no username necessary, greater possibilities existed for anonymity and one had to scroll through every recent post to follow the "action," as it was.

The messageboard contains archives of every post from every user since its inception. Additionally, users can start and participate in multiple threads, allowing for multiple conversations. This was originally part of the appeal of instituting a messageboard, as the thinking of many users was if you did not like a certain thread, you could avoid it. Said one interviewee, "I used to hate the petty bickering on the guestbook....(the messageboard) has moderators, I thought that would weed out the bickering."

However, two interviewees felt differently. One user felt that the guestbook kept the scene alive with discussion well enough on its own despite its negativity. The messageboard also featured negativity, but the heightened expectations surrounding it left the user rating it as a disappointment:

> I liked the guestbook of shame, I don’t know why they bothered to get rid of it. Well, I know why they got rid of it. They got rid of it because of all of the negativity and that. But…getting rid of that and keeping this? I remember the original argument was it was hard to keep track of the bickering. So they figured if it was easier to keep track of the bickering, then it’d be easier to stop it. ‘Cause you’d have this insult, you don’t know what (it was) because it was from 20 posts
up and now we’ll be able to weed out the bad stuff. And then it just became…I don’t even go to CBLocals (forum), I go to General and Buy & Sell. And I’m told that CBLocals is the worst (forum). I mean, it’s 90% total shit…the original goal has fallen far short.

A former promoter suggested that the "advance" of the messageboard really was not an advance for the discourse of the community. Under the old system, he argued, conversations had to keep moving because the guestbook forced you to "keep up." With the messageboard's archiving and the ability to maintain multiple threads at one time, he argued that topics lingered beyond their usefulness:

It earned the nickname “guestbook of shame” and I played a part in it as much as anyone (but) I would prefer the guestbook to the messageboard. It’s not as organized, there’s a thousand topics being discussed simultaneously by lots of different people. It’s difficult to follow and you have to read everything. The result was more concise discussions on certain topics.

Another former promoter noted that while the identification system on the guestbook was arbitrary, once users voluntarily identified themselves and posted information, they had to stand by it. The messageboard allowed users to edit their posts. For example, multiple interviewees alleged that Rod Gale had posted something which was a "veiled shot" at Slowcoaster. However, I could not verify this as Rod had edited the post in question. morgan had also been accused of making a post that contradicted his stance on homophobic language, but he edited the post to read "i am such a troublemaker" before I (and many others) had a chance to read it. "I don’t like that people can erase stuff that they wrote," the former promoter stated succinctly, "that was a tough one with the guestbook: you wrote it and that was that."
Admins and moderators rejected these opinions; one simply remarked "Naaaah!," when asked if the guestbook was better. Another stated "there's no way and in any form the guestbook could be seen as better than the messageboard." However, I found that they defended their opinions largely from the perspective of the messageboard as an amenity rather than as an infrastructural piece. The aforementioned messageboard critics questioned whether or not advancing to the "latest features" had benefitted the scene. One argued that regardless of whether the messageboard was more advanced, it had not advanced the scene. Another claimed that the restrictions of the guestbook were its strength—no one could start multiple threads and topic discussion was concise and kept scene participants focused.

Their stance on the guestbook was an odd form of luddite philosophy: favouring the Internet, but also favouring a simpler user of its features. Their defense illuminates the difference in perspectives of the Internet as a self-developing amenity and that of an infrastructural piece judged on the merits of what it does for the community, rather than how it alone evolves.

CONCLUSION

I posited to several people the question of what they thought life would be like if the CBLocals website had not come along. The majority responded that the scene would be much worse off. "I just don't think it'd be so well organized and well attended," said a veteran musician. He added: "they've recorded a lot of history (on CBLocals) in an encyclopedia." An expatriate argued that the CBLocals was the link between generations that kept the scene going as a continuous entity. He cited a 1980s Cape Breton musical act (Buddy & the Boys) as an example of what happened without the Internet:
What would happen is that music would not have died out, but let's say after the last person that did a Crack! show moved from Cape Breton and...there's no one to do Tilted shows any more with Harry. It would collapse onto itself...y'know, Buddy and the Boys realized a record. What happened after Buddy and the Boys? I mean, not like they were groundbreaking, but they put a record out and then what?...what happened in the 80s? Possibly the same thing would have happened now. There'd be people making music, people putting on shows, but I don't think we'd call it a scene or a community. We'd (always) be starting from square one.

Yet despite this opinion representing the majority, there remained a number of factors that users remained nostalgic for. They yearned for the days when conflicts were resolved face-to-face rather than through messageboard bickering. They wanted promoters to put more effort into spreading the word about shows via posters and print, which they felt was not happening in the Internet age. They lamented that less effort was required of scene participants and they perceived that less effort was being given.

Still the website and messageboard were still serving primary functions of the scene. They were the places people turned to set their social calendars— with even musicians admitting they did not know if they were playing a show until they checked it. It was a way to keep tabs on who was arguing with whom and to fire banter about assorted non-music events like Frisbee and softball.

If the CBLocals website is less and less frequented by younger users due to competition, the CBLocals scene as conceived by most of my interviewees will simply age although it will not likely disappear. There is some level of continuation, as identification with other websites has not completely diminished CBLocals as a tool for younger users. The promoters continued to
list CBLocals on their events posters (albeit they were putting up fewer of these posters) and Joe Costello in particular plugged the site frequently at shows. The presence of CBLocals remained very real even if younger users were no longer accessing it.

One member of the scene took a neutral stance on the effects the website had on the scene. She suggested that there will always be a music scene in Cape Breton but the CBLocals scene is forever tied to the website. Should the website go, she concluded, what will be left will be something that is not better or worse, but just different:

I think that the scene has become so tied to CBLocals that I’m not sure if one could exist without the other…we’re so used to having it that if we didn’t, we wouldn’t know what to do with ourselves…like, electricity. Imagine if there wasn't electricity tomorrow? Think how hard your life would be! It's not on such a grand scale because everybody uses electricity. Not everyone uses CBLocals. But I think the scene would be a very different place if CBLocals never happened and it will be a very different place if the website is gone.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Keith Hampton and Barry Wellman (2003) summarize studies of online communities into three lines of questioning:

1. Is the Internet severely weakening community, as people replaced in-person relationships with time spent online and out of the public realm?

2. Is the Internet transforming community into online “virtual community”, a whole new form of community that allows people to commune online in new agoras that reach across barriers of geography?

3. Or, is the Internet less transforming, adding its communication means on to phones, cars and planes as another way to be in contact with existing community members? (p. 3).

By following the third line of questioning, Hampton and Wellman choose to focus on the functional changes from new technology, downplaying the possibility that the Internet is having any major transformative effect. Wilson and Atkinson (2005) argue that we cannot understand music scenes today unless we understand the integration of online and offline communities as the commonplace reality of scenes. It seems moot to argue against the reality that the Internet is another way to "be in contact," ergo just as moot to argue for it.

The first line of inquiry is dissipating although it has not disappeared. Quentin Schultze (2002) is among the minority that proclaims "informationism" as the result of technological acceleration. This "informationism," he argues, is driving people to seek out data more than people, random online tidbits rather than coffee shop conversation, information rather than community. However, even Schultze does not call for the destruction of the Internet to save our communities, instead suggesting that we can overcome informationism by refocusing our "habits
of the heart" in the contemporary technological environment. The majority of the staunchest critics of new media still reject technological determinism and accept, as Colin Rule (2006) argues, "technology in the abstract is neutral, I still maintain, but specific applications of technology may not be."

In a post-technological determinist era of debate, we can also assess that the second line of inquiry possesses significant complications. It suggests that the smashing of physical and geographical constraints and borders is somehow a "new" form of community. The title "virtual community" reifies it as some imagined world compared to "real" community that preceded it that, depending on who you believe, was filled with the warmth of corporealism or tainted with the colonialism of borders. *Strictly* online communities do exist, and while in and of themselves they are significant means of communication, they do not transport humans from the corporeal. As Mullaney (2007), Coates (1998) and Marshall (2007) all discuss in their studies, considerations of gender and race remain with users even as they walk from the offline world into the online world.

Upon viewing how the CBLocals community has and has not changed, I now come to the conclusion that the CBLocals website is a new way for members of the scene to communicate that was not common in the scene's infancy. I also know that this website has not changed *every* aspect of the scene, only *some* aspects. This contribution to music scene studies suggests that we must treat the integrated state of the scene as reality but analyze this state for its limitations as well as its possibilities.

While users reach out for strictly online communities, the presence of geographically rooted forums indicates a strong desire to facilitate communication in the corporeal present. In doing so, they find the Internet helps them develop their community by fostering more
accessibility and mobility. Yet they also are coming to terms with what the website has not brought them. It has not brought a way to circumvent sociopolitical realities and racist and sexist attitudes. They also are trying to reconcile the increased accessibility with what they perceives as a loss of promotional and discussion ethic.

This dissertation argues that the Internet changes community in many ways on one hand, and it leaves the scene compositionally and ideologically similar on the other. Furthermore, CBLocals users agree that the CBLocals website has changed their scene yet they do not come to a clear consensus on whether the changes are entirely positive or negative, or even large in scope. Rather than embracing or rejecting the Internet, they find themselves conflicted about how to feel about the new integrated reality of their community.

Chapter 1 of this project provided a description of the CBLocals scene, as well as situating it culturally and geographically in the Cape Breton area. I explored conversations within music scene and online community studies to which I argue this study is in a position to contribute. I discussed my methodological concerns and how I arrived at the process that underwrote this analysis.

I conceded in the introduction that the Internet has changed music scenes in a series of simple ways: it was now the primary medium by which people communicated within the scene. It also provided another exclusive medium for people to make their contribution; several members of the scene identified others solely by their messageboard activity. It also provided a connecting point for expatriate members of the scene to remain involved and to feel a part of the scene.

However, in Chapters Two and Three, I argue that more significant features that clearly define music scenes remain unchanged. In Chapter 2, I analyzed representation of social
composition within the CBLocals community. Specifically, I addressed race and ethnicity, gender, region and class, sexualities and generations. I found that the CBLocals music scene, both on and offline, is typical of most indie rock scenes in North America in terms of its makeup. However, there are unique perceptions of ethnicity based on the scene's positioning as an alternative to the Celtic scene, rather than on race. I concluded that the website does not produce any change in how participants are hailed from varying races and ethnicities, gender, sexuality or generations. The website does, however, provide a forum for people to articulate their frustrations with class through the lens of regionalism (by way of comparison to the HalifaxLocals community).

In the third chapter, I discussed issues of professionalism and amateurism in music scenes. In order to understand this conversation in its proper context, I provided a history of local and national government involvement in music. I also discussed how professionalism and amateurism are pursued and perceived within scenes. I then analyzed a series of arguments within the CBLocals scene about government involvement and approaches to professionalism. I concluded that the CBLocals community has a specific perspective on the concept of "selling out" based on the region's economic history and circumstances. In short, the locale of the scene is still very important in shaping this discussion.

In summary, Chapters Two and Three demonstrate that the Internet does not affect some significant social factors that shape music scenes. We are still able to find differences in representation of various social groupings from one region to the next. Specifically this indie rock scene does not challenge perceptions of race, gender, sexuality or class on or offline. Also, local context still greatly affects how musicians perceive authenticity and selling out regardless
of national and international forums by which they could establish a shared widespread perception.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the CBLocals userbase experiences feelings of ambivalence over the development of the Internet. I argue that this ambivalence, rather than any utopian or dystopian result, is the ultimate consequence of online community. I discussed a brief history of online community studies that position this analysis as a counter to differing perceptions of utopia and dystopia. I describe what the CBLocals users believe the site and messageboard have done for the scene. What emerges is that users tend to have ambivalent feelings about each emergent quality, such as being attracted to the gossip on the messageboard while disliking its effect on the scene, or enjoying the promotional advantage of the website while disliking its effect on work ethic within the scene.

In the rest of this chapter, I detail my contributions to research and suggest directions for future research. The epilogue provides a summary of activity that has occurred in the CBLocals scene since I conducted the majority of my fieldwork in 2006. In discussing my contribution to the current pool of research, I first focus on online community studies before moving on to music scene studies.

**NEW MEDIA: UTOPIA AND NOSTALGIA**

Howard Rheingold (2007) remains positive about technological developments and how the current generation of teenagers can use it to improve the communities of tomorrow. "(A) majority of today’s youth…have created as well as consumed online content. I think this bodes well for the possibility that they will take the repair of the world into their own hands, instead of turning away from civic issues" (p. 29). Rheingold is particularly focused on the increasing
power that the user has over current technology, especially the Internet, in comparison to what he sees as relative passivity in viewing television.

However, Rheingold also comes to terms with the overly ambitious visions of online community that are often proclaimed in the name of his original study. He positions online communities as a game of give-and-take, where we must learn to focus on the positives while understanding that there are negatives to our highly interconnected environment: "Do we want cohesive societies...or democratic ones? Do we want warm communities, or innovative ones? Where are the spectrums of alternatives between these extremes?" (p. 49)

The CBLocals scene demonstrates that it has not fully arrived at the answers to these questions. Users celebrate what both the website and Harry himself have accomplished. "This guy shouldn't pay to go another show again," says one interviewee—the same interviewee who lists a serious of grievances with what the messageboard and website has done to create problems within the scene. The benefits touted from the website are both general for the Internet and specific to the site itself.

The Internet, musicians celebrate, has made it easier to the get the word out about shows. "You can plan your weekend" by going to the website and checking out the sidebar. The immediacy of the board makes the scene even "liver" than it was before and promoters are able to adjust shows, and even book new ones, on the fly in a manner they never could before. The forum is a host for lively conversation and leads many users to visit multiple times a day to keep up with the social activity. Furthermore, the website and its logo are social markers to rally around, providing a specific articulation of the community beyond "the scene" or "the shows."

However, we find that the very same traits that users love about the website are the same traits that create annoyance. This is an especially important clarification: users are not
identifying positive and negative traits of the website and music scene. Instead, they are listing traits of the website and music scene about which they feel both positively and negatively.

Checking out shows on the website is convenient, but people miss the hard work and art put into local press and poster. The discussion is lively, but the gossip creates bickering that detracts from organizational goals. The website has created an identifying point, but has thus created another medium to facilitate a hierarchy that may have too much power.

By stating that the CBLocals scene is similar to what it would be without the Internet, I am not stating the scene is the same. The medium provides a change ipso facto. Users can now upload their music for the world to hear in a matter of seconds; some of them have secured international distribution of their CDs (see Epilogue). People are able to arrange shows in a matter of hours through electronic communication. They are also able to distribute their music via mp3s. The communication between users in neighboring scenes has been heightened due to the connectivity of the Locals sites.

However, I argue that the effects of these changes are overstated, at least as it relates to music scenes. Has the Internet affected the industry of music? That is up to scholars of industry to decide. However, many of the apparent developments in the CBLocals community occurred before the website, through different channels of communication.

Despite the relative obscurity of the scene in its infancy, Sunfish was able to attain national distribution. Several users regaled me with stories of putting together threadbare shows through a series of telephone conversations. Despite the heightened communication between scenes, I actually saw less representation of the rest of Atlantic Canada in the summer of 2006 than I had seen in my high school and college days. This change is attributable as much to a
change in genre sensibility that favors the screamo movement from Western Ontario than any active impact from CBLocals.

By studying the effects without the context of commentary, we actually learn very little about online community when discussing the CBLocals scene. It is only when we analyze user's perceptions that we make the significant argument that the Internet, and new technologies in general, has left us wrestling with the conflicting visions of electronic utopianism and nostalgia. It is impossible to determine whether or not our communities are stronger and weaker as these terms are subjective in and of themselves. Users are wrestling with the terms that define a community and finding that the Internet can present advantages and disadvantages regardless of what one seeks from it.

MUSIC SCENES: RE-ATTACHING TO THE LOCAL

The CBLocals website attempted to disentangle itself from the cultural imaginary of a predominantly Celtic music scene in Cape Breton. This much can be observed by the absence of Celtic promotion. The website is subsequently reincorporated into the physical reality of industrial Cape Breton through the socialization and staging of shows in other genres, thus creating an alternative cultural imaginary. However, the initial disentanglement is never total. As it draws upon preexisting physical realities to shape its content, it cannot completely recreate a new cultural imaginary.

The Halifax scene existed in 2006 as a counter imaginary for which the CBLocals scene compared itself and to which some users aspired. CBLocals gave users a chance to develop Cape Breton in the image of an indie rock scene. It is still far from an online utopia or even an attempt at one. It also exists in a web of other localities and thus other imaginaries. Some interviewees compared the CBLocals forum to the HalifaxLocals forum and felt that this
reflected strongly on Halifax's scene but poorly on their own. Others resented this interpretation and felt that the Halifax scene represented the worst qualities of indie rock snobbery. As many of its users (and the messageboard’s moderator) are originally from Cape Breton, the realities of the economics of the physical world are brought to bear on the online world. There was outward resentment towards the Halifax scene and discontent that many former contributors to the Cape Breton scene had turned to that community.

Industrial Cape Breton still remains an economically depressed area. There is a lack of many of the resources on which music scenes typically thrive (an abundance of clubs, coffee shops or alternative press). There may be online representation of the coffee shop and the independently owned record store but there remains a pining for the physical coffee shop and the physical record store. The cultural imaginary of Cape Breton is represented in CBLocals but it is a continued negotiation of what is desirable and what is physically present in reality.

Of course, the lack of a unified vision within the community is part of this negotiation. Not everyone on CBLocals can agree on what they want their music scene to be or what it is. They do all agree that it represents a vision of Cape Breton that is in direct contrast to how they feel it is portrayed to the provincial region or the rest of the world. There is a struggle over imaginaries on and offline—no one is content with any exact representation or even sure what that means.

Furthermore, it is impossible to envision conversations on issues of professionalism and amateurism playing out in other scenes in the same fashion as in CBLocals. While there are a strong number of participants that favor provincial funding, I find it highly unlikely that an argument over such an arrangement would even occur within most other scenes. If it did occur,
it would not owe itself to the specific attitudes towards government involvement in music and the economy that exist in Cape Breton.

CBLocals demonstrates that identities of music scenes can and sometimes do remain rooted in regional concerns. To better understand music scenes identified by geography is not to dismiss the locale as significant in a "glocal" environment but rather as continually evolving, but still local, environments that function in intertwined online and offline environments. Online music community studies— and online community studies in general— must be steered away from the presupposition of detached locality.

FUTURE AVENUES OF STUDY

There are a variety of internal arguments within this dissertation that contribute to the overall argument that online developments have changed, but not completely transformed, music scenes. As such, many of these internal lines of inquiry, as well as my overall argument, are subject to further analysis and discussion. I discuss these avenues of study here.

The most theoretically challenging occurrence in the CBLocals community in 2006 was the ongoing debate over professional philosophy. It affected the perceptions of the pros and cons of professionalism and shaped differing concepts of the indie aesthetic. It also demonstrates differences of how professionalism is conceived in differing national and regional contexts. I found it particularly interesting that significant figures within the scene, albeit a vocal minority, considered government grants to be a form of "selling out."

There has been research exploring national attitudes towards arts funding and how this affects music scenes in practice. In particular, I have provided detail on how the Canadian environment for musicians differs significantly from the United States and is more emblematic of a European model. The concept of the "state supported professional" complicates the
dilettante-amateur-professional paradigm not only in music scene studies but in any artistic profession. Future studies of music scenes should explore the feelings that musicians have towards using government support for their endeavors and whether or not this creates tension within communities, particularly in areas where the government is not supported. Do musicians justify "selling out" to corporations in the same fashion as they justify utilizing government funding? If not, what rhetoric is used to differentiate accepting public money over private money, even if they disagree with the policies of the people providing the public money? There are ideological issues regarding governance and structure in music scene worthy of exploring.

Second, more research is necessary for the issue of generational evolution within scenes. What I discovered in the CBLocals scene is that while users commonly described an evolving, fluid scene, in many ways it resembled non-continuous entities sharing a geographic bond. The web space also provided a bridge for locally placed music communities to maintain a sense of continuity even as generational differences threaten to sever it. Yet, with fewer younger users relying on CBLocals, it bears asking whether or not music scenes are destined to be fluid entities, only properly understood as specific moments in time.

Whereas we should reconsider Connell and Gibson's (2003) assertion that scenes are “de-linked” from locality, it is worth asking whether or not they are chronologically static. One possible conception is that of music scenes as a chronological series of communities bridged by local and, now, technological commonalities. This is particularly true of smaller regional music collectives where participants are less inclined to avoid music they dislike due to a smaller number of choices. I am not comfortable coming to this conclusion based on this dissertation but feel that future studies may provide clearer insight on this proposition.
My personal experience living in a heavily populated urban environment (Atlanta) and contrasting it from Cape Breton, Sydney specifically, has informed another curiosity. This study has taken us beyond the trap of studying only major urban centers. However, future research that actually places heavily populated urban environments alongside lower populated suburban and rural areas may provide additional illumination to how new technology has affected the imaginary of scenes. One can own a Blackberry or access the Internet almost anywhere in North America, but not every location has the same basic amenities that underwrite the offline activities that define most music scenes. Therefore, the class conflicts envisioned through the lens of "Halifax vs. Sydney" may be found in a variety of urban-suburban counterparts across North America.

Future scholarship should ask: how do increasing online/offline hybrids affect cultural imaginaries? How is a music scene in Kansas affected by the political and economical realities of the region and furthermore, what conditions does the Internet challenge and what conditions does it exacerbate? In the case of CBLocals, the website provided a strong connecting point for a geographical area with a sprawling population as well as providing a resource for those who temporarily or permanently abandon the geographical location. Nevertheless, it has yet to result in wholesale change. The lack of record shops and economic depression still affects the socialization within the community and the situation appears unlikely to change any time soon.

Finally, more studies are needed to support the findings here on tensions between libertarian and communitarian models of music scenes. The clash between Sean MacGillvary and his antagonists over acceptable cultural discourse (particularly in regards to homosexuality) was also a clash between strict libertarianism and quality control. Lorne Tompkins and many others Sean viewed as antagonists held to a conception of punk as a rebellion against any
authoritative restrictions. Sean MacGillvary saw his restrictions less as oppressive but as in keeping with a quality control measure consistent with D.I.Y. culture of any generation. There is a meritocratic element to communitarianism when it is applied to any medium: certain messageboard contributions are considered "trash" based less on aesthetic purpose but more because they undermine a specific value of the community. In this case, openness towards gender and sexuality was a value considered to be a necessary virtue to be enforced, even at the expense of a libertarian perspective.

The Internet appears to exacerbate a fissure in the punk or D.I.Y. aesthetic. In 1980s D.I.Y. and punk culture, zines and shows remained regulated to such a degree that those with hierarchical power could choose the ideas to distribute based on their standards of quality. By 2006, there was an increased use of forums, rather than zines, to express opinions and largely unregulated (in terms of aesthetic quality) web pages distributing music content. Of course, even in the zine era, vigilance against skinheads, homophobes and other forms of inclusion were perceived as necessary. This continues into 2009 and examines closer consideration as it challenges the idealized notion held within 1980s punk and D.I.Y. communities that greater access was the key to a stronger music community.

The CBLocals scene is a representation of the current reality of most music scenes: an intense integration of offline and online communication. While we find that this creates new challenges and opportunities for participants, it does not transform the community to any degree that it is not typical of the traditional "indie rock" scene. It remains to be seen whether or not changes in genre popularity, economic developments or differing migration patterns will change the scene so that it will be unrecognizable in the future. What is known now is that while there
were different musicians, fans and genres in 2006 as opposed to 1994, the CBLocals scene remained an indie rock scene, typical of its regional and cultural placement.

**EPILOGUE: DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE SUMMER OF 2006**

The CBLocals website remains unchanged in layout and design. Harry Doyle returned to moderating the CBLocals messageboard in 2007. He replaced Sean MacGillvary (poorhaus), who maintained his role moderating the HalifaxLocals website and messageboard. From August 2006-May 2009, the CBLocals events bar listed 812 music events, 156 of these were all-ages.

The scene has lost, and gained, a number of venues since 2006. The December 22, 2007, Owners of the Steelworkers' Hall building (site of the first *Gobblefest*) renovated it in 2008. It is now a SEARS outlet. The Maple Leaf Lounge ceased staging shows by the end of 2006. The Upstairs remained active in presenting bar shows until May 2009 when Yvette Rogers declared the venue would be indefinitely inactive. In the meantime, Bunker's owners renovated the building to be fully integrated with Governor's Restaurant as Governor's Restaurant & Pub.

Harry Doyle wrote on the CBLocals website on April 26, 2009, that the renovation was a "big win for our music scene!" Brian and Susan Martin, who also own the much CBLocals-derided Club Capri, opened Maxwell's in 2007, which now features a number of CBLocals bands on a regular basis.

Some promoters have either become inactive or reduced their activity in the scene. Joe Costello and Under the Underground ceased promoting shows in 2007. Gillian Hillier still works in promotion, but no longer promotes local shows. Darryl MacKinnon now works at Governor's and promotes their shows. Rod Gale ceased promoting shows in 2007.

Start the Show is still promoting all-ages events. A messageboard controversy emerged in July 2008 in which Start the Show was accused of failing to pay monies promised to Get It!
Get Down! for recording purposes. Danny MacNeil continues to perform and now also organizes all-ages events.

MySpace and Facebook use remains prevalent in the scene. Band names on the CBLocals events page are usually linked to the artist’s MySpace page whereas events themselves are linked to Facebook event pages. Industry tracker comScore declared that Facebook had “officially” surpassed MySpace as the world’s most popular networking site (*Herald Sun (Australia)*, August 15, 2008). The popularity of the privately-owned Twitter (Lee, 2009) has yet to visibly affect the scene.


Cape Breton University professor Doug Lionais founded the Cape Breton Music Export Marketing Program in 2007. The organization’s stated objective was to “create a vibrant, fully integrated music industry in Cape Breton.” The organization worked in conjunction with government organization Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation to offer funding to Cape Breton musicians. Three of the eight members of the Board of Directors were originally associated with the HOR. As of 2008, the group is inactive.
The most popular bands in the AA scene in 2006 were Drowning Shakespeare and Richmond Hill. Drowning Shakespeare signed to Torque Records, an independent label based in Saskatchewan. Through Torque, the band is distributed worldwide via Victory Records. The band is working on a new record for late 2009. In 2007, Richmond Hill changed its name to Wolves. They released an EP in early-2008 but have since been inactive.

Drummer Dylan Mombourquette (dylan-m) is the drummer for Ricochet! and for Rufi Jackson. He was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer in 2009. A group of bands staged a benefit show at Bunker's on March 20. He reported positive news on the CBLocals messageboard on May 19, 2009, declaring that tests showed the removal of all cancer in his face and lower body.

CBLocals users septicsystem and Jimmy returned to the messageboard under various names. Each worked with website owner Harry Doyle for their musical projects and expressed support for his work. Lorne Tompkins (identified by users as Dropkick Tompkins) plays guitar in Unbidden. In May 2009, he started a CBLocals thread expressing concern with a lack of bars featuring metal bands.

On August 10, 2008, the Conservative government of Canada announced that it was reducing federal funding for international touring costs for Canadian artists (Houpt, 2008). Cuts to arts funding were cited as one cause for the Conservative party losing support in Quebec and failing to attain a majority government in the 2008 Federal Election (Thompson, 2008). Representatives of the provincial riding Cape Breton South from the New Democratic Party and Progressive Conservative Party posted to the CBLocals messageboard in May 2009. Each responded to questions from the userbase about arts initiatives relating to the 2009 Provincial election on June 9, 2009.
On February 24, 2007, 10x12 took place at the Steelworkers’ Hall. The event was named to commemorate 10 years of CBLocals with 12 bands. Local CBC radio program *Mainstreet* dedicated its entire episode the previous day to local music and CBLocals. Over 200 people attended the show for an admission price of $5 each. Proceeds went to the Coxheath, Sydney River and Area Skatepark Society.
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