
Samuel C. Allen  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor  
Dr. Keir Keightley  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Popular Music and Culture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

© Samuel C. Allen 2013

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd)

Part of the [Community-Based Research Commons](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd)

Recommended Citation

[https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/1460](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/1460)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact tadam@uwo.ca, wlswadmin@uwo.ca.
TREASURIES OF SUBCULTURAL CAPITAL: THREE INDIE INSTITUTIONS IN THE LONDON, ONTARIO INDEPENDENT-MUSIC SCENE

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Samuel Charles Allen

Graduate Program in Popular Music and Culture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Popular Music and Culture

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© Samuel Charles Allen 2013
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role institutions play within the London, Ontario independent-music scene. Institutions are where indie-music scenes happen (Kruse 2003). They are crucial to indie community-building in scenes, and provide the spaces and opportunities for indie-music activities to publically take place. Local institutions engage with scenes by providing scaled-down versions of the so-called mainstream music industry. I refer to these as “indie-style economies.” However, institutions are also organizational structures which influence the social and power relations within scenes. In particular, hierarchical distinctions between scene members are found to be based on the consecration of what Sarah Thornton (1995) calls subcultural capital. This thesis uses London as a case study of indie-music scenes. Three institutions are considered: the live-music venue APK Live, the independent record store Grooves Records, and the campus and community radio station CHRW Radio Western. Research methods include participant observation, interviews, and an application of theoretical literature.

Keywords
Indie Music, Scenes, Institutions, Subcultural Capital, Live-Music Venue, Independent Record Store, Campus and Community Radio, London, ON
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Keir Keightley for his guidance, patience and dedication to this thesis. Thank you also to Dr. Matt Stahl, my second reader.

I would like to thank all of my teachers and professors over the years. I could not have gotten here without the hard work of many talented, knowledgeable, and caring educators. Special thanks to John Reed. Thanks John, for being a great teacher, mentor, and friend.

Thanks also to my family and to Amanda, for your support through this process.

Thank you to all of my colleagues in the Popular Music and Culture, and Media Studies programs.

Finally, thank you to everyone in the London, Ontario indie-music scene. Without you this project would not exist. Thank you for lending your experiences to these pages and for all of the years of music, art, and friendship.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..................................................................................................... iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF APPENDICES ...................................................................................................... vi

1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1

Questions ................................................................................................................................ 1

Method .................................................................................................................................... 2

Structure .................................................................................................................................. 7

2 LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................... 9

Indie Genre Rules and Conventions ..................................................................................... 9

Process of Agency and Meaning Making in Music Scenes ..................................................... 18

Indie Institutions and the Shaping of Value ......................................................................... 24

3 APK LIVE .......................................................................................................................... 31

APK Live and Scene Values ................................................................................................. 31

The Structuring of Meaning and Subcultural Capital ............................................................. 42

APK Live Closes and the Need for an Institutional Hub ......................................................... 48

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 53

4 GROOVES RECORDS ..................................................................................................... 56

Facing the Store .................................................................................................................... 56

The Indie-Style Economy ..................................................................................................... 62

Subcultural Capital, Hierarchy and Display ......................................................................... 69

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 76

5 CHRW RADIO WESTERN ............................................................................................... 80

On the Air .............................................................................................................................. 81
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: List on Interviewees ................................................................. 116
Appendix B: Information Letter ................................................................... 118
Appendix C: Consent Form ............................................................................ 120
Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions ..................................................... 121
Appendix E: Ethics Approval .......................................................................... 122
Appendix F: End of Study Report ................................................................. 123
1 INTRODUCTION

My interest in indie-music scenes stems from my participation and experiences in the scene in London, Ontario. At the end of high school, I was playing guitar and bass in bands downtown. By the beginning of my undergraduate career, at the University of Western Ontario, I was regularly attending musical events at the gastro-arts pub The Alex P. Keaton, house-shows in artists and musicians’ apartments, and art openings in established and makeshift galleries. I spent my days digging through vinyl albums at Grooves Records and educating myself on indie music and culture by listening to CHRW Radio Western. A group of friends and I formed the Open House Arts Collective, with the goal of promoting and supporting the local music scene. Together we booked concerts and festivals, manufactured and released albums, and organized interviews with press in the city. People were always collaborating in the scene and it was exciting to hear and see what my friends were creating together. What we felt we could do in the scene by working together motivated us. It was exciting to realize what we could accomplish through our collective efforts. It was only after beginning to do research into popular music that I realized that our experiences belonged to a history of similar musical production and activity dating back at least thirty years from when we started.

Questions

Reflecting on my experiences within the London indie-music scene, I began to wonder how scenes worked. I realized that the scene consisted of people and their actions and beliefs, and the spaces that provided opportunities and structures to the scene: what I call “institutions.” However, I began to question what underlay the processes of the scene. The work of Will Straw (1991, 2001, 2005), Barry Shank (1994) and Holly Kruse (2003) helped me realize the deeper social and ideological dynamics of music scenes. Through David Hesmondhalgh (1999) and Simon Frith’s (1996) work, I realized the strong role genre plays in musical belief systems and music scenes. The work of Matt Stahl (2003) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1993) led me to consider scenes as fields of power, where scene members jockey for position in a social and cultural hierarchy.
Finally, the work of Keir Keightley (2001) helped me realize the importance of scale in the economic practices of indie music. I review the work of these scholars, and others, in Chapter 2 of this thesis. With this foundation, I came to ask, how does an institution contribute to the processes of an indie-music scene? What is the role of an institution in the social and power relations of an indie-music scene and how does it function? What is the relationship between scene members and an institution? To answer these questions, it became apparent that it would be necessary to combine both the relevant theoretical literature and my own empirical research on the subject. Accordingly, an ethnographic study of the London, Ontario indie-music scene is at the core of this thesis, with the theoretical work used to form a more complete understanding of the complex workings of the scene.

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the role of institutions within indie-music scenes. This thesis considers both how participants experience indie-music scenes and how institutions structure those experiences. Presented here is a social study in the field of popular music studies; asking what is the influence of indie-music genre values and rules (Frith 1996) on the social practices of youth? What is the role of an institution in creating and structuring these genre values and rules? This thesis explores these questions through the study of three institutions in the London indie-music scene.

Method

In this thesis, the institutions I focus on are the live-music venue APK Live, the local independent record store Grooves Records, and the campus and community radio station CHRW Radio Western. I chose these three institutions based on my own experiences, their apparent centrality to the scene, and preliminary interviews. Each institution also represents one of Kruse’s “right elements” of an indie-music scene:

In the narrative of indie music, Athens [Georgia] was important not only because it produced notable alternative bands, but also because it signified the possibility that any locality with the right elements—in the case of Athens, an alternative college radio station (WUOG), alternative clubs in which to play (Tyrone’s, the 40-Watt Club), an independent record store (Wuxtry)—could become an indie-music mecca. (2003, 20)
Collectively, similar institutions are representative of the indie-music scene in London. Each represents a different level of economic mediation within the scene and negotiates its relationship with the scene accordingly. APK Live was forced to close due to its failure to become economically profitable, Grooves operates through a small-scale version of mainstream practices, and CHRW is a not-for-profit organization. Together, these institutions cover the daytime and nighttime social spaces of the scene, and include spaces of face-to-face interaction as well as forms of virtual or mediated experience. Each also contributes to the experience of local music within the scene.

The method of this study involves a combination of participant observation, interviews, and academic sources. I believe that in order to gain a true understanding of social relations, a researcher should immerse her or himself in the world of those relationships. As noted by sociologist Danny L. Jorgensen, “the methodology of participant observation is exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds” (1989, 12). Through ethnography, a researcher has the potential to gain a deeper understanding of a music scene through experiencing life as an insider. This experience can provide an understanding that would not otherwise be available. As Jorgensen states: “personal experience derived from direct participation in the insiders’ world is an extremely valuable source of information, especially if the researcher has performed membership roles and otherwise experienced life as an insider” (1989, 93). As sociologist Robert M. Emerson explains, “going out into the field [offers] another important advantage: It [gives] the researcher access to the subjective point of view of those studied” (2001, 11).

My own experiences as a participant in the London’s indie-music scene can contribute to this project, adding details and depth that might not be available to nonparticipants. As Emerson’s notes, there is an advantage to being an active participant: “by having field workers actually do what members do, as opposed to simply observing these processes from the outside (no matter how emphatically), membership fieldwork generates deeper sensitivity and insight” (2001, 124). My experiences contribute to the analysis, through a lived understanding of the object of study.
At the same time, relevant scholarly literature helps the researcher understand what she or he observes in the field. In my thesis, the academic work of others has proven extremely helpful. It has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my experiences and the experiences of others, to understand the role of institutions in social relations. I hope that the combination of ethnography and the scholarly literature will work together to create a fuller understanding of the scene. I discuss the main body of academic work employed in this project in the next chapter.

This study includes interviews with, and observations of, musicians, audience members, venue/bar owners and staff, booking agents, radio hosts and other radio employees, record store owners and employees, and other participants in the London indie-music scene. In a casual fashion, I had already been observing scene members throughout my time as a member of the scene (circa 2006 to the present). For this thesis, I conducted participant-observation fieldwork between August 2012 and February 2013. Observations took place primarily at APK Live, Grooves Records, and CHRW Radio Western. I conducted interviews with twenty scene members. I chose interviewees based on their familiarity and experience with the chosen institutions. I interviewed scene members who I felt were informed and could provide relevant information for this study. I did not consider other factors of identity, such as age, gender, or class, when choosing interviewees. When asked about their experiences and relationships with these institutions, interviewees did not directly discuss issues surrounding these elements of identity and instead spoke of the institutions through their identities as a member of the scene, or manager of Grooves, or CHRW volunteer, etc.

The interviews were between twenty and seventy minutes in length and I transcribed them into text documents. I quote the interviews from the transcriptions. The initials of the respondents and the page number of the transcription identify each quote. For example, I would cite a quotation from musician and sound engineer Tim Glasgow from the sixteenth page of his transcribed interview as “(TG, 16).” These interviews were semi-structured and addressed participants’ personal experiences and relationships with institutions and other participants within the indie-music scene. I guided each interview with broad questions (see Appendix D), but attempted not to lead interviewees in their
answers. I use the opinions and activities of the interviewees as evidence. I do not question the honesty or truthfulness of the respondents. This project seeks to understand how and why the participants’ world exists as it does, and so it does not attempt to recount what respondents “really mean” or what their world is “really like.” Scene members experience the scene as they describe it. I then ask, “how and why does it exist this way?” Responses are abridged for clarity. This introduction now turns to a discussion of the methodological challenges of ethnography.

Participant observation comes with risks and it is important that I remain aware of them throughout this project. The researcher and the readers should be aware of any biases the researcher holds in order to keep the study as accurate as possible. As Emerson notes, being open about one’s biases has been a long-standing procedure in the social sciences: “anthropological accounts first appearing in the late 1930s urged that the personal biases of the fieldworker be brought into the open” (2001, 19). My previous experiences and connections to London’s indie-music scene have the potential to influence my analysis. As a member of London’s indie-music scene for the last seven years, I have personal connections to many of the scene members and institutions studied. I feel affection for the scene, I want to see it, and scene members, do well. Although I started to question critically my own values by the end of this study, I began with many of the same values that participants expressed throughout the interviews. Through this project my view of the scene has changed, as I have become more aware of the inner workings of the scene.

I have attempted to be forthcoming about my involvement in the indie-music scene, in order to reveal my biases. Shank is careful to note his role in his investigation of Austin’s music scene:

I have inserted myself as an actor in the stories I tell. By announcing my interests, I hope to mark out my specific placement in the constellation of forces and to use that positioning to achieve a dialectic of distance and intimacy, subject and object, generality and particularity, description and object described, throughout the book. (1994, xii)
I also hope to achieve “a dialectic of distance and intimacy” within my study: to balance my experiences with a more critical eye as a researcher.

Participating in a field can offer personal insights and information, but it can also impair the analytical eye of the researcher. Jorgensen notes that, “the more you participate, the less you are able to observe” as “subjective involvement is thought to be a threat to objectivity” (1989, 55). By identifying with the subjects of study, the researcher potentially becomes blind to certain inequalities as “once you have become even somewhat familiar with the setting, its initial newness and strangeness also will be lost” (1989, 57). Shank acknowledges this concern and warns that through “participation in cultural practice ethnographers experience a subjective identification with the internal dimensions of their object.” Therefore, Shank contends that, “writing an ethnography then becomes an attempt to recreate a necessary distance between this object and our writing selves, to re-establish the borders, using the materials of our craft” (1994, xii). In order to create this “necessary distance,” I tried to observe everything with new eyes and question what I have come to recognize as normal activities and obvious answers in the interviews. I have studied my interview notes as a text while still utilizing my experiences for understanding.

Additionally, due to my biases, I faced the challenge of staying cognizant that this project remained a critical study and not simply a lobbying effort for the local scene. As sociologists, Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley (1994) argue, participant observation should not be used for any goal other than acquiring knowledge: “utopian attempts to do politics by means of research are of no service to anyone” (253, 254). This task was difficult at first. It was only after deeper thought, examination, and reading that I began to see the underlying social and power structures within the scene whose analysis is at the core of this thesis.

Finally, as the researcher is a kind of gatekeeper of the information about the object—whether it be as an observer or as an interviewer—I understand that it is important that I maintain Shank’s “dialectic of distance and intimacy,” and ask questions
while not leading the respondents. As Morris S. and Charlotte Green Schwartz state, it is important that the researcher remain committed to objectivity:

Since, in any social research, the observer is the instrument through which and by which the phenomena of the investigation are selected and filtered as well as interpreted and evaluated, the way in which he operates is crucial in transposing “reality” into data and in producing a close correspondence between the actual and the recorded event. (1955, 343)

The following chapters attempt to represent the experienced “reality” of the respondents as they saw the world and as I came to understand it through the organizational structures of the indie-music scene.

Structure

This thesis begins with the Literature Review, which provides the theoretical context for the rest of the thesis. I review the genre of indie music, its values, practices and meanings to establish what indie music is within this project and what it means to scene members. Scenes, the places and spaces where indie-music activities exist, produce and reproduce meaning through community activity. Institutions are crucial elements of scenes. I review research on institutions in indie-music scenes and within studies in urban geography on indie-music. This chapter concludes with a focus on how institutions can structure meaning within indie-music scenes through the consecration of what Sarah Thornton (1995) calls subcultural capital.

Chapter 3 involves an ethnographic study of the live music venue APK Live and discusses scene members’ experiences and perceptions of the venue. I examine the institution’s role in the social and power relations of the scene. I discuss the closure of APK Live and the effect it had on the scene. By investigating what participants felt about the venue’s absence, I highlight the role of APK Live as an institution within the scene.

Chapter 4 studies the independent record store Grooves Records, focusing on the values shared between Grooves staff and the indie-music scene. The store operates under what I call an “indie-style economy:” this facilitates the scene through the fostering of community and the distribution of indie music, yet also benefits the store by developing a
profitable niche market. I examine how Grooves confers subcultural capital onto participants, through their interaction within this indie-style economy and review the role of vinyl records and CDs within this indie-style economy.

The campus and community radio station CHRW Radio Western is the focus of Chapter 5. I analyze the effect its mandate for alternative programing has on the station and consequently on the social and subcultural capitals circulating in the scene. I also analyze the station’s mandate for a local and community focus, with a specific look at participants’ entrance into the scene. I consider the constraints on status within indie-music scenes based on the limits of local institutions within the scenes. I conclude the chapter by asking how local institutions may be “echo chambers” of indie-music scenes.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to situate my ethnography, this chapter reviews relevant literature to develop a history and context for indie-music scenes. The literature discussed here provides the theoretical frame for my thesis. First, in order to examine the role of institutions in the social and power relationships of indie-music scenes, it is important that this study outline the concepts of indie music and music scenes. Understanding the genre rules and conventions, and the history of indie music, will help to contextualize the values and interests of scene members. The world of indie music influences how respondents experience the scene and react to it. Participants’ relationship with indie music frames their perceptions of the institutions, and I understand most of the scene members’ actions, beliefs, and interview responses to be shaped by the ideology of indie music. As this thesis studies London’s indie-music scene, I review the concept of a scene. I defend the use of the term scene against related terms, such as “art-world” or “tribe.” An understanding of the dynamic nature of a music scene provides an important framework to this study. Next, I review relevant literature on institutions within indie-music scenes. What are some of the roles of these institutions within indie-music scenes? Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of social hierarchy and power within scenes. I use Sarah Thornton’s theory of subcultural capital (1995) in order to analyze hierarchical status and the role of indie institutions within the scene’s classifications and distinctions.

Indie Genre Rules and Conventions

Indie is a field of cultural production that includes film, literature, and music. This thesis will focus on indie as a genre of popular music. In order to understand the role of indie institutions within an indie-music scene, the meanings, values, and cultural practices of the indie-music genre must first be understood. What do indie-music participants value and why? What do they identify with? In his book, Performing Rites, Simon Frith describes a genre as encompassing a musical style, social conventions, and a market (1996, 76). A genre identifies the music and those involved with it. As Frith writes, “once signed [to a record label], once labeled [with a genre], musicians will
thereafter be expected to act and play and look in certain ways; decisions about recording
sessions, promotional photos, record jackets, press interviews, video styles, and so on,
will all be taken with genre rules in mind” (1996, 76). These rules are not just relevant to
artists signed to record labels, but work as the conventions that everyone within a
particular musical world (including performers and audience members) come to learn and
follow. In this way, genre rules are similar to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. As
explained by Randal Johnson (1993), “the habitus is sometimes described as a ‘feel for
the game’, a ‘practical sense’ (sens pratique) that inclines agents to act and react in
specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated… it is a set of dispositions
which generates practices and perceptions” (5). As Ruth Finnegan writes in her book The
Hidden Musicians, “music is thus defined in conventions supported by existing practices
and ideas about the right way in which music should be realized” (1989, 7). A musical
genre represents a “shared musical knowledge and experience” of particular stylistic and
social conventions between participants (Frith 1996, 87). Once an individual is identified
or identifies with a particular genre, he or she is expected to, and often wants to, play out
and display particular characteristics of that genre according to the expectations and
conventions of the genre.

Genre rules help explain and determine meaning within a genre. As Frith writes,
“genres describe not just who listeners are, but also what this music means to them. In
deciding to label a music or a musician in a particular way, record companies are saying
something about both what people like and why they like it; the musical label acts as a
condensed sociological and ideological argument” (Frith 1996, 86). A genre thus works
as a marker of identity, influencing the meaning of the music for an individual, and
informing his or her taste.

Using Finnegan’s book, Frith discusses the social effect of a genre and states that
“Finnegan shows that to have a musical interest, a genre taste, is to engage in the set of
relationships which give meaning to that taste. An individual’s liking for punk or opera,
for country music or progressive rock, whether as performer or audience, is a
commitment to a taste community” (1996, 89). In this way, the genre an individual
associates with affects his or her social life, including both actions and meanings (1996,
Genre brings together both ideological and social discourses to form communities of people based on shared interests and belief systems. These communities are music scenes, as discussed below. As Frith concludes, “it is genre rules which determine how musical forms are taken to convey meaning and value, which determine the aptness of different sorts of judgment, which determine the competence of different people to make assessments. It is through genres that we experience music and musical relations, that we bring together the aesthetic and the ethical” (1996, 95). The genre an individual identifies with influences his or her entire musical world and beliefs, helping to inform and form his or her identity, and giving a sense of belonging to him or her. Due to this influence, it is important to understand the indie genre in order to grasp the indie-music scene of London, Ontario. The following addresses some of these values and meanings.

**Indie and the “Mainstream”**

As a genre of popular music, the term “indie” has a double meaning: first, it can refer to music believed to have been produced using localized, “do it yourself” (DIY) approaches, and thus distinct from mainstream musical-industrial practices; and second, it may describe musical-stylistic practices historically associated with a dissident tradition (such as punk). The use of the word “indie” often invokes both meanings, expressing the political economic values of the genre and the sound developed around those values. As Geoff Stahl states, “independent in the context of musicmaking means both a mode of musical production separate from the mainstream recording industry as well as a combined set of social and aesthetic practices” (2001, 103). Indie thus coheres around a perceived rejection of “the mainstream” in both its aesthetic and ethical interests.

In contrast to indie, mainstream major record labels are businesses with large distribution, publicity, and production facilities (Kruse 2003, 30). The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry reported that in 2004 71.7 percent of the world market share for music was held by the “big four” record labels: Universal Music Group (with a 25.5% share), Sony BMG (with a 21.5% share), EMI (with a 13.4% share) and Warner Music Group (with an 11.3% share) (IFPI 2005). All independent labels (which
As of 2013, three major labels dominate the music industry. In 2008 Sony bought out BMG to make Sony Music Entertainment Inc. (Nakashima 2008), while BMG Publishing was purchased earlier by Universal (BBC NEWS 2006). In 2012, Universal and Sony each acquired different parts of EMI (Businessweek 2012). These sales have created a powerful “big three” in the music industry—Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment Inc., and Warner Music Group—who together control a 74.8 percent share of the world market for music, including both physical and digital sales, with indies combining for only a 25.2 percent share (Music & Copyright 2012). Even within the shifting industry due to the advent of the Internet and online music distribution (McLeod 2005), the dominance of the major labels in the music industry cannot be disputed as three companies control three quarters of the industry.

Due to these inequalities of power, rock and indie fans often criticize the mainstream for exploiting artists in attempts to gain large profits, and focusing on commerce over creativity. These critiques often come in the form of attacks on the music itself as lacking value. As Keir Keightley writes, “the idea of rock involves a rejection of those aspects of mass-distributed music which are believed to be soft, safe or trivial, those things which may be dismissed as worthless ‘pop’—the very opposite of rock” (2001, 109). Wendy Fonarow explains this position in reference to indie:

Indie’s ideological stance contrasts with its own image of the mainstream as bloated, safe, clichéd, and banal. In this view, the mainstream is seen to produce “products” that are overprocessed and slick. Indie invokes the mainstream as a bogeyman full of avaricious Frankenstein’s, large corporations with their legions of men in suits, manipulating the gullible public by pandering to their worst instincts. (2006, 65)

Indie’s disdain marks the mainstream as something completely apart from indie, and therefore indie defines itself as the opposite of the mainstream.

In North America, indie developed out of the “alternative rock” movement of the 1980s. As Michael Azerrad discusses in his book *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, “beneath
the radar of the corporate behemoths, these enterprising, frankly entrepreneurial people had built an effective shadow distribution, communications, and promotion network – a cultural underground railroad” (2001, 3). This “alternative network” included “a sprawling cooperative of fanzines, underground and college radio stations, local cable access shows, mom-and-pop record stores, independent distributors and record labels, tip sheets, nightclubs and alternative venues, booking agents, bands, and fans that had been thriving for more than a decade before the mainstream took notice” (2001, 3). Azerrad notes that, lacking the tools of the major labels, including large distribution and access to commercial radio, “indie labels had to develop obscure artists on a grassroots level, essentially functioning with one or more arms tied behind their back” (2001, 5).

Throughout his book, Azerrad views indie artists as struggling within the “shadow” of the major labels.

Azerrad’s arguments act as examples of the indie-music genre’s disdain for the mainstream, as he intentionally ignores any band or music produced by major labels and possesses a strong ideological bias against them. As he states outright in his introduction: “this book is devoted solely to bands who were on independent labels,” as “virtually every band did their best and most influential work during their indie years; and once they went to a major label, an important connection to the underground community was invariably lost” (2001, 5). This passage demonstrates how independence from the mainstream is a core and traditional marker of value within the indie-music genre.

Indie music’s autonomous networks from the mainstream were fundamental to the development of the indie genre. As David Hesmondhalgh notes, significantly, “no music genre had ever before taken its name from the form of industrial organization behind it,” as the name was based on the independent relationship artists and bands had with major record labels (1999, 35). Born out of the post-punk, anti-corporate movement in the United Kingdom, indie “proclaimed itself to be superior to other genres not only because it was more relevant or authentic to the youth who produced and consumed it (which was what rock had claimed) but also because it was based on new relationships between creativity and commerce” (1999, 35). Indie artists were suspicious of, and criticized, those who seemed to value economic capital over creativity as “sell-outs,” abandoning
“previously held political and aesthetic commitments for financial gain” (1999, 36). For indie, creative autonomy from the mainstream was the ultimate goal.

Still, as Keightley (2001) argues, in practice indie does not completely abstain from financial reward, as indie-music consumption is still a part of consumer capitalism (129). It is indie’s investment in “the miniature: in boutique record stores, 45 rpm singles, small runs of home-made cassettes, or the reverent recreation of miniature models of past eras or albums,” that separates it from the mainstream (2001, 129). As Keightley states, “indie rock is defined by its concern for the scale of consumer capitalism, rather than by its radical rejection of an economic system” (2001, 129). Accordingly, the smaller degree of an artist’s dependence on or engagement with mainstream economics, the more authentic—and thus “more indie”—an artist appears. This, nonetheless, may involve a small-scale version of the mainstream music industry (Keightley 2001, 129). Moreover, Hesmondhalgh explains, “Bourdieu often writes of small-scale production as oriented towards the production of ‘pure’ artistic products” (2006, 214). In this way, indie participants are able to see their small-scale version of the mainstream as more “pure” art, as they have a degree of distance from economic necessity or the demands of capital. This preference for small-scale mainstream practices leads to the creation of what I call “indie-style economies” within indie-music scenes. I discuss Grooves Records as an example of an indie-style economy in chapter 4.

Keightley’s (2001) argument fits well with a contemporary reading of the indie genre. Indie today is not as defiant of systems of economic capital as it was at the onset (for example Azerrad’s depiction of the indie underground of the 1980s; 2001). The genre allows for some degrees of economic success. As Nitsuh Abebe writes in an article for Pitchfork, indie audiences are becoming more accepting of mainstream or pop music: “the sense has been that the average ‘indie’ listener would like a bit of both, some pop records to sing along to and some stranger ones [more distant from the mainstream] to be wowed by, plus plenty in between” (2010).

Emily Dolan argues that indie has never been completely separate from the mainstream. According to Dolan, indie developed through a “parasitic relationship with
mainstream popular music” as its aesthetic and socio-economic stances exist in opposition to major labels (2010, 460). As a result, indie music cannot be completely independent from major labels, as those labels inform indie’s ideology of resistance. Much like Warren Zanes’ description of rock’s valuing system as “this is good because it is not that,” indie’s own identity is reliant on the majors as it works to define itself against the mainstream (2007, 284). The designation of one thing as “good” by being marked in distinction against something else as “bad” relates to Bourdieu’s concept of taste. As Bourdieu discusses, arguments about taste distinguish what is valued by marking distinctions between what is “good” or “bad,” or, “between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar” (1984, 6). In order to define itself as “good,” indie requires the mainstream to be “bad.” Thornton found a similar declaration of value within her study of UK dance music: “the mainstream is the entity against which the majority of clubbers define themselves” (Thornton 1995, 5). As will be seen, indie fans and scene participants also make such distinctions within the genre.

The connection between the indie-music genre and the mainstream is taken further when considering that the mainstream industry, the “big three,” controls much of the independent industry. For example, the numbers from the Music & Copyright (2012) article, cited above, include the argument that singer Adele helped indie labels compete with major labels in 2011, as its title claims: “The Adele effect hits major-record-company market shares in 2011.” However, although Adele is signed to the independent label XL Recordings (XL Recordings Releases 2012), Billboard reports that Adele contributed to Sony’s market share in 2012, as Sony distributes XL Recordings (Christman 2012). Moreover, Universal publishes Adele’s music, and therefore her music contributes to Universal’s total market share as well (Universal Music Publishing Group 2012). In contrast to Music & Copyright’s numbers (2012), Billboard reports that the “big three” major labels combine for 88.58 percent of the market share, noting that “the indie market share has been left out of the above rankings… because all the above market share rankings are based on which company distributes the music” (Christman 2012). This difference demonstrates the power the major labels have, particularly as they often control the distribution of independent labels as well.
Not only do major labels have large market control through distribution of indie products, they also hold control over the indie labels themselves. As Hesmondhalgh argues, “the small company in partnership with a larger [record label] is in [the position] of having decisions about finances and overall strategy ultimately made for them depending on which level of partnership they undertake” (1999, 54). Although indie labels benefit from increased distribution of their product, Hesmondhalgh maintains, “such partnerships, it should be noted, are potentially of enormous financial benefit to major corporations. A senior executive at one major record company told me that his firm would be aiming at gaining 80 per cent of their revenues from distribution, and only 10 per cent from bands signed directly to the company” (1999, 54). Therefore, although both parties benefit, “the greater power is with the majors” who control distribution (1999, 54).

**Indie Values DIY**

“Do it yourself” or DIY practices are a central means by which indie maintains a distance from the mainstream. As Kruse writes, “the very belief that indie pop/rock music was and is DIY music is crucial to defining the genre” (2003, 11). DIY ethics in indie-music culture can create excitement and motivation for musicians often frustrated by the major labels’ exclusivity and systems of exploitation (Albini 1993). As seen, major labels have large economic capital to invest in the production of music and own large and powerful infrastructures to distribute music. This gives them “monopolistic” power as gatekeepers in the industry, allowing only a small percentage of musicians to participate (McLeod 2005, 522-524). In this regard, the prospect of being able to “do it yourself,” distinct from the mainstream industry, can be very inspiring to young musicians, and links them back to the political-economic origins of the genre (Hesmondhalgh 1999). The motivation behind DIY is made clear by Azerrad: “the breakthrough realization that you didn’t have to be a blow-dried guitar god to be a valid rock musician ran deep; it was liberating on many levels” (2001, 6). The indie-music genre extends the notion derived from punk that anyone can pick up a guitar and be a musician to the idea that any group of people can form their own record label and release their own or their friends’ music.
Indeed, DIY aspirations lead many early independent-music entrepreneurs to form their own record labels. For example, Azerrad discusses how Greg Ginn of Black Flag founded and operated his own label, SST: “Black Flag was among the first bands to suggest that if you didn’t like ‘the system’, you could simply create one of your own” (2001, 14). Hesmondhalgh notes that indie labels “maintained a distance from major capital by forming alternative networks of distribution” in order to do it themselves (1999, 39). As indie labels are often created by musicians, such as Ginn, indie labels focus on “artistic autonomy for musicians,” (1999, 35) and are often managed by musicians themselves (1999, 40). McLeod echoes this, “I do not mean to romanticize indie labels or claim that they always behave more ethically than majors, but they do tend to be more closely involved with artists, and are often run by artists” (2005, 528). Here artistic autonomy is valued both aesthetically and ethically due to the freedoms obtained through DIY practices. Still, it is important to remember that ultimately “the DIY universe was a mythic construct,” and “businesses and bands did not exist independent of mainstream influence” (Kruse 2003, 11). Complete autonomy is not possible; however, it is possible for a lot to be accomplished through alternative, although parallel, systems.

**Indie Values Community**

The indie-music genre values a sense of community, related to familiarity, friendship, and support. Indie music and indie labels often form in small localities where a strong sense of local importance develops through the grass-roots organization of DIY initiatives. Through the DIY practices of a group of people “suffering” against the mainstream, a “sense of belonging” forms in indie-music scenes (Stahl 2001, 106). Especially in areas of low economic stakes, such as Halifax, NS, as discussed by Brian Hracs et al., a sense of community is very important compared to the competitive and hierarchical nature of larger centres, such as Toronto, ON (2011, 372-373). In small localities, a sense of solidarity is formed through group participation in DIY activities, which contrasts with the “climate of fierce competition… without many supportive organizations” in larger cities such as Toronto (Cummins-Russell and Rantisi 2012, 92).
Musicians actively working together, in collectives at small record labels or within scenes, contribute to the sense of community within indie music. For example, Hesmondhalgh notes the early indie record label, Crass Records, “was centered around a collective based at a rented farmhouse in Epping, to the north-east of London” (1999, 40). Another 1980s indie label, One Little Indian, “was as musician-centered as the other post-punk independents” (1999, 43) with musicians working together in a collaborative fashion (1999, 44). Within these collectives and labels, the desire for artistic autonomy often led artists to work as support systems for each other, creating a strong sense of community within indie.

The indie genre’s focus on degrees of artistic autonomy from the mainstream leads to local participant activity. As Kruse notes, indie-music scenes are “formed and maintained within particular places: within localities and within specific local sites (clubs, record stores, coffee shops, houses)” (2003, 114). The DIY activities and community practices of indie participants are often based within indie institutions where local musicians create, perform, and release music apart from the large-scale music industry, motivated by the aesthetic and ethical rejection of the mainstream. Indie-music participants play out this rejection in smaller-scale economic worlds (indie-style economies), through the freedom that DIY methods appear to give them. It is within indie-music scenes that indie activities and practices take place. As such, this chapter now turns to a review of the literature on scenes.

Processes of Agency and Meaning Making in Music Scenes

Indie music is often born out of local music scenes. For this project, I describe the places and spaces where indie musicians and participants are active, using the term “scene” rather than related terms such as “community” or “art world” (Becker 1982). As I will discuss, the term “scene” is a more dynamic and therefore a more suitable word. “Scene” is also the term most often used by indie participants in London, Ontario and thus the use of the word is appropriate for this study. It is within scenes that indie values are put into practice and experienced. Similar to Sarah Thornton’s notion of “taste
cultures,” (1995, 3) people come together in scenes based on shared tastes, interests, and location.

In his foundational study of the music scene in Austin, Texas, Barry Shank argued that a scene is a place of “overproductive signifying,” where “far more semiotic information is produced than can be rationally parsed” (1994, 122). For Shank, the “display of more than can be understood” is the result of participants’ search for an identity within the scene (1994, 122). This search motivates scene members to take part in small moments of identification (such as concerts or band rehearsals), searching for a wholeness of identity which Shank analyzes through Lacan’s mirror stage (1994, 129-131). Through the search for identity “the musicians and the fans who embody the rock’n’roll scene in Austin are united by an intensity of commitment driven by anxiety” (1994, 131). Shank champions the anxious drive for identity as the basis of the success of the scene. He argues that this anxiety leads to more and more musical output: “Spectators become fans, fans become musicians, musicians are always already fans, all constructing the nonobjects of identification through their performances as subjects of enunciation—becoming and disseminating the subject-in-process of the signifying practice of rock’n’roll music” (1994, 131). Through this process, a scene develops into a group of people continually driven to the production and consumption of indie music, due to an anxious desire for identity fulfillment within the music scene that they continue to produce. For Shank, processes of identity drive a music scene.

Will Straw (1991) draws an important distinction between “community” and “scene,” stating that musical scenes may be understood as “distinct, in significant ways, from older notions of a musical community” (469). He notes that a musical community “presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable—according to a wide range of sociological variables—and whose involvement in music takes the form of an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms [genres or styles] said to be rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage” (1991, 469). The “sense of purpose” of the musical community derives from an “affective link” between contemporary musical practices and a musical heritage, which gives contemporary practice its context (1991, 469). Musical communities exist primarily relative to one geographic location and
are interested in the stabilization of local historical continuities within that location (1991, 469).

In contrast, a musical scene for Straw “is that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and crossfertilization” (1991, 469). Within a musical scene, a “sense of purpose” develops through the building of musical alliances between other scenes or genres and the drawing of musical boundaries through growth (1991, 469). A scene is constantly interacting with other scenes, both locally and internationally, to combine new ideas and sounds in its own perpetual development. No emergent style ever becomes the dominant or “trajectory movement” of a scene, as “different musical practices [come] to map out a range of increasingly specific stylistic combinations within an ongoing process of differentiation and complexification” (1991, 471). Through its communication with similar spaces, a scene is always absorbing and developing new music. Unlike a musical community, Straw notes that change occurring in both local and international music influences musical scenes. In addition, scenes are not opposed to disrupting historical continuities, in order to cosmopolitanize and relativize them (1991, 469).

In “Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes? None of the Above,” Hesmondhalgh (2005) critiques the continued use of the term “scene” in academic work and the use of similar terms such as “tribe” and “subculture.” He argues, “both Shank and Straw borrow this vernacular musical and cultural term and put it to stimulating use, but they do so in widely disparate ways” (2005, 28). As well as the two authors having a different theoretical approach, Hesmondhalgh contends that “Straw seems to be advocating scene as a word that questions the notion of local community that Shank celebrates, and which Straw associates specifically with the rock genre” (2005, 28). Hesmondhalgh notes that Straw sees rock as “static, lacking in innovation, oriented mainly towards the white male connoisseur. [While] Shank, by contrast, is a rock advocate” (2005, 28). Here,
Hesmondhalgh sees one scholar as championing the importance of the local community in scenes, while the other praises cosmopolitan influences within them.\footnote{It should be noted that at the time of Straw’s writing (1991) alternative or indie rock was seen as stagnant in comparison to what Hesmondhalgh notes as the “constantly evolving nature of electronic dance music” (2005, 28). Today, indie music is arguably much more open to change and innovation (Abebe 2009).}

Although “these differences could of course be read as two sides of a productive dialogue,” Hesmondhalgh claims that the adopted use of the term by popular music studies has been ambiguous and “downright confusing” (2005, 28-29). He argues that the term has been employed by scholars without the subtleties and details of Shank and Straw, as the field’s “alternative to ‘subculture’” (2005, 28). For Hesmondhalgh this oversimplified use of the term is troublesome as he fears that “sometimes the term scene is used to make studies of particular locales sound more theoretically innovative than they really are” (2005, 29). Further, he notes that other uses of the term broaden it, detracting from its original and complex nuances (2005, 29). An example of such generalizing is the global “metal scene” studied by Harris (2000, cited in Hesmondhalgh 2005, 29). Hesmondhalgh recommends that other terms, such as “genre,” would be a more appropriate label for studies such as that by Harris (2000).

Hesmondhalgh concludes that “the term has been used for too long in too many different and imprecise ways for those involved in popular music studies to be sure that it can register the ambivalences that Straw hopes it will” (2005, 30). Still, the term “scene” can be quite valuable through an application of both Shank and Straw and a careful awareness of the dangers of oversimplification or generalization. By providing a clear and detailed discussion of the application of the word in this thesis, “scene” can be a very useful term for studying local, indie-music practice.

Today, with the influence of new digital technologies on popular music production, consumption, and distribution (see McLeod 2005, Jones 2000 and 2002), almost anyone with Internet access has the very postmodern ability to obtain almost any popular music, from almost anywhere or anytime. As David Harvey notes,
“postmodernism abandons all sense of historical continuity and memory, while simultaneously developing an incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present” (1990, 54). Because of the condition of postmodernity, contemporary musicians within local music scenes are able to mix influences from the “plunder” of many different historical times and spaces, to create a collaged sound that can become localized through collaboration, experience, and local ideas. Along with the Internet, this activity is accomplished through digital technologies such as home-studio recording software, editing equipment, and digital music files. This combination of influences and activities demonstrates the productive duality of the term “scene.” Like the local scene described by Shank, these practices produce more activities than can be easily understood locally (1994, 122). At the same time, the network of the Internet and the vast influences it allows relate to Straw’s notions of the cosmopolitan alliances between musical scenes (1991, 469), through both space and time.

Also, as the world becomes more fragmented within postmodernity (Harvey 1990, 44), localness and a sense of community grow in importance as citizens search for an “eternal truth” (Harvey 1990, 292) or “stability and purity” (Shank 1994, 134) to comfort or anchor them within the ephemerality of the present. As Harvey states, “the revival of interest in basic institutions (such as the family and community), and the search for historical roots are all signs of a search for more secure moorings and longer-lasting values in a shifting world” (1990, 292). This point is supported by Zanes (1999) who notes, “the postmodern sensibility can be thought of as marked by a perceived loss and, in turn, a longing for the authentic” which can be conceptualized within rock or indie music as leading to a “reformation of community” (60-61). Due to the perceived loss of stability within postmodernity, community and authenticity become more valuable to our society and the indie-music genre reflects these values. Therefore, although the Internet has accelerated the globalization of popular music, it has also assisted, in some cases, in the development of a culture more concerned with local scenes, creating a network of localities.

The globalization of popular music is seen in the work of Brian Hracs et al. who discuss how new technologies, such as social media, allow indie-music scenes to be less
tied to major centres. For example, scenes can thrive in “remote” areas such as Halifax, NS (2011, 368). Still, Thomas Cummins-Russell and Norma Rantisi (2012) argue that for local indie music, “Internet use remains firmly rooted in the local scene; bands primarily connect with local fans and industry actors online” (83). Not only do digital technologies allow for increased connectivity across physical locations, they also reinforce strong local ties.

Thus “scene,” like “indie,” can possess multiple meanings. Kruse argues that scenes “encompass both the geographical sites of localized musical practice and the social and economic networks that exist within these contexts” (2003, 145). A scene can be a local, geographic space involved in the development of a particular musical sound, based in the history of that area, as Shank contends (1994, 122). At the same time, as Straw suggests, a scene can be a local space which is influenced by multiple scenes worldwide as well as locally, creating alliances with other sounds and genres while working to combine them into an eclectic local sound (1991, 469). Straw’s work (1991) can also be used to explain how scenes such as Shank’s in Austin (1994) continue to evolve as the world becomes more and more connected. As noted by Kruse, “localities, as both geographic and social sites, do not exist in isolation: they are nodes in social and economic networks and derive meanings from their relationships with and to other localities” (2003, 114). A scene should thus be observed as a process, a term used to map out a local space where groups of people produce and consume music that is continually moving through relationships between members of the local scene, relationships with other scenes directly (or indirectly via the Internet), and relationships between the local city and society as a whole.

Understood as a process, a scene is similar to an art world as first discussed by Howard Becker (1982). Art worlds describe the networks, activities and people that are involved in the creation of an artwork. As Becker notes, “art worlds, through the activities of participants other than the artists, affect art works beyond the life of the work’s original maker” (1982, 198). Although smaller in scope than an art world (which includes everything from the creation of a musical instrument to an understanding and responsive audience; Becker 1982, 2), a music scene involves many different people
performing many different tasks, including songwriting, recording, broadcasting, listening, poster ing, going to shows, bar tending, and promotion. In this way, a scene can be understood to influence the meaning of a work as it moves across various different roles and identities.

The concept of an art world is similar to Bourdieu’s notion of an artistic field (1993). Meaning and value are formed through “critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.)” (1993, 37). Within an artistic field not only do the networks, activities, and people involved lead to the creation of a work, they also lead to the creation of the meaning and value of that work for the field (1993, 37). Therefore when studying scenes it is important to consider who produces cultural products, how people attribute meaning and value to those products, and the social conditions in which the people created the works.

**Indie Institutions and the Shaping of Value**

Indie institutions are sites of indie-music scene activities, which provide opportunities for scene participants. Indie institutions also structure indie-music scenes, and as will be argued throughout this thesis, they play an influential role in social and power relations within indie-music scenes. Through these characteristics indie institutions are similar to art galleries and other cultural institutions (DiMaggio 1982), but they differ in their economic and cultural scales and formalities. Although research on indie institutions is limited, the following section discusses indie institutions in the research on scenes. For instance, in her book on indie-music scenes, Kruse discusses the important influence institutions have on the strength of the local Athens, Georgia scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the college radio station WUOG, the live-music venues Tyrone’s and the 40-Watt Club, and the independent record store Wuxtry. According to Kruse, with the “right” combination of working institutions it is possible for “any locality” to develop a creative and prominent scene. But is this always the case? What are the characteristics of institutions that make them valuable to a scene?
To begin, a paid job at an institution provides scene participants with a regular income and allows them, in a way, to work in the scene. As Geoff Stahl observed in Montreal, “many individuals try to make sense of the city’s depressed economy while remaining true to their musical aspirations by working for any one of a number of industrial actors that play an important support role in the city’s Anglophone musical culture” (2001, 109). Stahl cites “the one-stop distributor [and record store] Cargo Canada” as an example which, amongst other things, “[offered] a workspace where musically inclined individuals could meet” (2001, 109). Furthermore, in a discussion of the necessity of “day jobs” for indie musicians in Austin, Texas, Shank notes that “a position at a record store, especially at one of the major independent stores like Waterloo, is a relatively prestigious and sought-after day job” as employees are able to be a part of the scene, even while at work (1994, 165).

Institutions also provide the spaces for a scene to exist. Scenes cannot thrive without space for participants to meet, talk, rehearse, perform, and listen. Kruse discusses the importance of a local record store as a space for a scene: “record stores are not merely retail outlets; they are spaces of social interaction and socialization. Customers often seek advice from, or seek to exchange knowledge with, store employees, and through this process learn not just about various artists, records, and genres, but also about the local music culture” (2003, 94). For Kruse, the space of a record store creates the opportunity for individuals to learn and develop an understanding of indie music through the sharing of information through social interaction.

Independent record stores are not the only institutions that provide scene members with physical spaces. Campus radio stations and live-music venues are also important spaces within indie-music scenes. For example, Fonarow (2006) discusses the role of the live-music venue, through shows or “gigs,” as a physical location within indie:

The gig converts the indie community from one of discourse to one of interaction. Since indie is not a geographical enclave, members find others by participating in the activities that designate one as a member of the community… The gig, occurring regularly and bringing together large numbers of indie fans, is the key event for face-to-face interaction. (79)
A music venue provides the space for the “gig” and “face-to-face interaction” to exist. As an indie-music scene is not a “geographical enclave,” studying live-music venues provides an opportunity to map out participants’ activities. In their study of the indie-music scene in Montreal, Cummins-Russell and Rantisi found that:

[F]ace-to-face contact remains extremely important despite technological advances such as the emergence of online networking [e.g. Facebook]. Face-to-face contact allows for the development of trust, as well as for the effective evaluation of actors’ skills and personalities, whereas online networking is used primarily for promotion (replacing or complementing traditional methods such as poster campaigns) and maintaining contacts. (2012, 86)

As scenes are a complex amalgamation of people, ideas, and activities, institutions provide important spaces for these elements to meet and mix.

As gathering spaces, institutions serve as places for community networking. Cummins-Russell and Rantisi note that in Montreal, “there are established institutions on the retail streets of Mile End… that serve as public spaces in which performing artists congregate and network, allowing for both planned and unplanned encounters” (2012, 91). Moreover, as Matt Stahl (2003) observed in San Francisco, in institutions “newcomers [to a scene] often cultivate relationships with some or all of these groups of participants [such as bands, club bookers and DJs] to find practice space, get gigs and exposure, and get even small amounts of support for production and distribution of recordings” (145). Here participants interact with gatekeepers and intermediaries, networking through the hierarchy of the scene (2003, 145). Scene members use this networking to gain and maintain access to the scene and these activities often take place within the scene’s institutions. As Cummins-Russell and Rantisi discuss, a space where scene participants can “cluster facilitates communication” (2012, 81)—communication that is needed to produce the community environment of DIY practices that constitutes an indie-music scene.

Networking exists within all institutions where participants meet and socialize within an indie-music scene. For example, in his Master’s thesis Brian Fauteux studied the CKUT Radio-McGill program “Underground Sounds.” Fauteux notes that during an interview on the program, “the program, the station, the artist, and the host are all
members of the same music scene, interacting in a geographic locality, benefiting from the different roles each participant plays” (2008, 87). Here the institution of the campus and community radio station provides both a physical space and virtual “space” where networking and communication can take place among different scene participants, where different knowledges and experiences can be shared to mutual benefit.

Institutions do not just provide locations for networking, but also function as nodes within the larger network of the scene. Speaking of campus and community radio at McGill University, Geoff Stahl (2001) states that through communication within the radio station “aspiring musicmakers can find themselves immersed in city-wide industrial and institutional networks which link together a range of media, media outlets and musical fora which serve to deepen the urban sociomusical experience” (2001, 108). This network of communication is important to the indie genre and its emphasis on local ties and communal support.

The observations of Finnegan (1989), Shank (1994), Kruse (2003), and Matt Stahl (2003) also demonstrate the educational function of institutions within an indie-music scene. As Finnegan states, “[rock musicians] typically learn ‘on the job’ by becoming members of local groups, sometimes with practically no previous musical experience at all but developing their skills through local practicing and performing” (1989, 18). New participants are able to learn the genre rules (Frith 1996) and conventions of a scene by taking part in scene activities, such as networking at a record store or attending a gig. Current participants are able to stay connected and up-to-date through ongoing interactions at institutions. Straw (2005) discusses the role of networking within institutions as the training-ground for scene participation:

[T]he knowledges required for a career in artistic fields are acquired in the movement into and through a scene, as individuals gather around themselves the sets of relationships and behaviours that are the preconditions of acceptance… The “vertical” relationship of master to student is transformed, in scenes, into the spatial relationship of outside to inside; the neophyte advances “horizontally,” moving from the margins of a scene towards its centre. (413)
By learning the different conventions of an indie-music scene, through communication and participation within institutions, individuals are able to gain entrance to and acceptance within a music scene (Stahl 2001, 109).

Networking, learning, and “advancing horizontally” within an institution involve negotiating hierarchical difference within a scene. As Matt Stahl argues in “To Hell with Heteronomy: Liberalism, Rule-making, and the Pursuit of ‘Community’ in an Urban Rock Scene,” institutions play a large role within the hierarchy of the scene (2003). As he states, “institutions of the music business—regional and local as well as national radio, record labels, journals, fanzines, music TV programmers, venues, and so on—are in the business of hierarchizing” (2003, 140). Stahl writes, “local indie rock practices can legitimately be viewed as agonistic ‘position takings’ [citing Bourdieu (1993)] directed toward career development in the field of commercial popular music” (2003, 147). Institutions can be sites where participants jockey for position within the scene, looking to gain cultural and economic capital. For example, distinctions between who is featured on a venue’s stage and who is not can develop or reinforce hierarchical differences (Stahl 2003, 140).

Subcultural Capital

Discussing the late 19th century art world in Boston, Paul DiMaggio (1982) explains that, “it was the vision of the founders of the institutions that have become, in effect, the treasuries of cultural capital upon which their descendants have drawn that defined the nature of cultural capital in American society” (35). The ideology of these founders came to define cultural capital and the value of art for that society through the structuring process of the institutions (1982, 35, 45). As organizational structures for a society, institutions are sites of centralized power over cultural capital—over what is and is not culturally valuable—and thus also sites of control over ideology. As stated by DiMaggio, “the first step in the creation of a high culture was the centralization of artistic activities within institutions controlled by Boston’s cultural capitalists… These institutions were to provide a framework, in the visual arts and music, respectively, for the definition of high art” (1982, 40). Institutions are sites of power, which structure
which art is and is not valuable. As the institutions were locations where the founders’ cultural capital was displayed and learned, institutions themselves seemed to be “treasuries of cultural capital” (1982, 35).

As I will argue, indie institutions play a similar structural role within indie-music scenes. As Stahl argues, institutions “not only produce differences between ranks of musicians in the world of indie rock, they also structure the kinds of sociality that are possible in that world” (2003, 140). Institutions can influence taste and value. As Bourdieu argues, there is no intrinsic value within an artistic field; the taste for certain artistic works is taught through education and experience: “A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code which it is encoded” (1984, 2). As Johnson explains, “the possession of this code, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education)” (1993, 7). Within indie-music scenes, institutions can be the sites where this code is learned. What the scene values is what is on display in indie record stores, played on indie radio, and performed on indie stages. Scene members learn how to value music, fashion, or artwork within the indie genre through networking and participation within indie institutions. Again, certain sounds, styles, or ethics are not inherently “good” or “bad,” but rather those values are assigned and must be continuously reproduced through institutions within the scene, based on the genre’s rules. Such practices value some things over others, creating a distinction between what is valued and what is not. In order to gain status within the scene, participants follow these conventions and attempt to act, sound, or look “good,” or authentic, according to the rules of the genre.

In this thesis, I use Sarah Thornton’s theory of subcultural capital to analyze hierarchical difference within indie-music scenes (1995). In her book, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, Thornton describes subcultural capital as related to “hipness,” used to form “distinctions [that] have significant consequences” within subcultures (1995, 11). She states, “subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the
eyes of the relevant beholder. In many ways it affects the standing of the young like its adult equivalent [Bourdieu’s cultural capital]” (1995, 11). Looking at London, Ontario’s indie-music scene as a subcultural group, subcultural capital “confers status” upon valued or “hip” participants within and from the perspective of the indie-music scene, the “relevant beholder[s]”—those who share the same subcultural code. Within the scene, an individual is conferred subcultural capital if he or she embodies the values of the scene, through the “right” actions or by being “in the know.” At the same time, subcultural capital can be objectified in the form of “fashionable” style, and items such as “well-assembled record collections” (1995, 11-12). In both cases, what is valued is that which scene members interpret as “hip” or authentic following the indie-music genre’s rules. Just as Bourdieu uses cultural capital as a social distinguiser within art words, subcultural capital marks social distinctions within scenes.

In this thesis, I show how indie institutions can be sites of consecration. Bourdieu uses the term “consecration” to describe the process where a “magical division” forms between the “beautiful” and “distinguished” art or artist, and the “ugly” and “vulgar” art or artist (1984, 6). For Bourdieu, the process of consecration, in a sense, blesses or makes “sacred” the art or artist within the art world: “cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation” (1984, 6). As Vaughn Schmutz notes, “acts of cultural consecration identify a select few cultural producers and products that are deserving of particular esteem and approbation in contrast with the many that are not” (2005, 1511). In indie-music scenes, consecration is marked by levels of subcultural capital possessed and perceived by scene members. Subcultural capital distinguishes certain cultural products, such as albums, and particular musicians, from others. These distinctions lead to hierarchical status for scene members as aesthetic distinctions of taste within the scene come to represent social distinctions. As Bourdieu argues, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make” (1984, 6). As I will argue, indie institutions consecrate scene members via subcultural capital. This consecration influences the social and power relations of scene members and structures meaning within the scene.
3 APK LIVE

In this chapter, I explore the role of a live-music venue as an indie-music scene institution, through the study of APK Live in London, Ontario. The venue housed much of the music and many of the events of London’s indie-music scene. The social gathering associated with a music venue is crucial to indie-music scenes. As outlined in the Literature Review, members of indie-music scenes value communal and participatory culture, where they can interact face-to-face. As Wendy Fonarow argues, “the gig [held in a music venue] converts the indie community from one of discourse to one of interaction,” by bringing the indie scene physically together (2006, 79). A music venue provides the needed space for live music and social interaction to take place. Yet, a music scene is more than just live music and involves multifaceted social and power relations. As Holly Kruse writes, scenes “encompass both the geographical sites of localized musical practice and the social and economic networks that exist within these contexts” (2003, 145). Music venues are indie institutions that play a role in such networks. Paul DiMaggio (1982) argues that institutions act as “official organizational structures” that work to create meaning and structure authority within art worlds (45). I investigate how APK Live, as an indie institution within London’s indie-music scene, operates in this way.

APK Live and Scene Values

APK Live was open from September 2010 to October 2012, when it closed in the midst of my research.² APK Live was a central institution within London’s indie-music scene. London’s indie-music scene is different today than it was in the 1990s and early 2000s. According to musician and sound engineer Tim Glasgow, in the 1990s audiences and bands filled an abundance of venues most nights of the week. Whereas today, Glasgow said, only a few key venues and a smaller number of bands and audience

² Due to the timing of this closure, respondents speak of APK Live in the present or past tense, depending on when their interview took place.
members make up the scene (TG, 3). For example, APK Live’s manager estimated the size of the current live rock and pop music community to be 2000 people, with approximately 90 local rock and pop bands (Manager, 4). This community is drawn from a total London population of 366, 515 people (Statistics Canada). APK Live’s manager noted that there is a “multiplicity of scenes” within this larger music community and found “that people tend to stick to particular genres of music.” The manager commented that, “the semi-regulars who attended our funk shows would not be present at our punk shows (e.g., a Five Alarm Funk show vs. a Soupcans show), though I would see them over and over again at our funk shows” (Manager, 4).

APK Live’s predecessor, The Alex P. Keaton, seemed to shape scene members’ perceptions of APK Live. Understanding some of its history will help position my ethnography of APK Live. The Alex P. Keaton was a gastro-arts pub located in an old Victorian house at the corner of Talbot and Albert Streets, one block west of Richmond Row in London, Ontario. Respondents discussed the pub affectionately, describing it as “a gem” where scene participants could “hang out” with their friends most nights of the week and hear live music on Wednesdays and weekends. As scene member Katie McGoldrick said, “you could walk by on a Wednesday night and see a friend on the patio and see people inside the windows and be like, ‘oh hey look, so and so is here, let’s go in and say hi’” (KM, 3). The Alex P. Keaton had been a space where like-minded people could meet, gather, and share their interests. As musician and writer Sam Shelstad described it, “the old APK [The Alex P. Keaton] seemed like the local pub for artsy kids or something. Just because it was small and open every night, and it had a nice patio and people just went there to have a drink, or there’d be a small show… I probably met you there one night” (SS, 4). Musician Kelly Wallraff said she “instantly felt comfortable with that place. It was not fancy, but it wasn’t dingy, it was just perfect” (KW, 2). The

---

3 APK Live’s manager wished to remain anonymous within this thesis, but allowed identification through position.

4 Genre can often be an indicator of a particular scene. Indeed, David Hesmondhalgh (2005) prefers the term “genre” to discuss the “relationship between particular social groups and musical styles” to “scene” (32). However, as discussed in the Literature Review, for this thesis I use the word “scene” instead.
pub regularly featured folk, experimental, and indie music. Art from local artists hung on the walls as a makeshift gallery. The corner that served as a stage, with its broken mic stands and poor P.A. system, may have contributed to the feeling of intimacy amongst patrons. These casual and unprofessional aspects of the pub resonated with participants’ values of do-it-yourself culture, as the stage area felt like it was falling together and falling apart at once. This stage created the appearance of a low-stakes performance space, distinct from the loud and well-lit stage of rock venue Call the Office. As an undergrad student, I saw The Alex P. Keaton as a welcoming entry point into the indie-music scene. The pub came to represent the values of the indie-music scene for scene members. The Alex P. Keaton closed in the spring of 2009, leaving a gap in the scene.

In 2010, the former owners of The Alex P. Keaton announced that they would be re-launching their pub as the live-music venue APK Live. As local musician Andrew James recalled, “I was really excited when they were opening and they were going to be a venue and it was going to be just a cool, great place to have stuff happen and to go to” (AJ, 20). Although The Alex P. Keaton was a venue for live-music, this was not its primary function. In contrast, the owners of APK Live intended the venue to be primarily a space for the performance of live music. Shelstad explained the difference, “the new one [APK Live] is a venue. People don’t go there just to drink and stuff. There’s shows and events and stuff like that and it’s a lot bigger. So, one [The Alex P. Keaton] you would go to if there was nothing going on and the new one [APK Live] seems like you would go because you have a ticket” (SS, 4). The owners built APK Live on the legacy of The Alex P. Keaton. APK Live’s manager was well aware of this heritage and said that the owners gave the manager this position because the owners wished to keep the spirit of The Alex P. Keaton alive. APK Live’s manager said, “[I wanted to] ensure that the spirit was kept and then it could be built upon,” noting, “I had a lot of ideas that I felt I could bring to the table to support it and make it grow” (Manager, 2). As if to emphasize the
inheritance of this spirit, The Alex P. Keaton’s old sign hung on the south wall of APK Live, behind the stage, as a kind of shrine.\(^5\)

APK Live—or “APK,” as many participants called it—was located in downtown London at the northeast corner of Wellington and York Streets. For the most part, APK Live focused on the indie-music scene three nights a week, during their regular programming of music Thursday to Saturday nights. Whereas its predecessor, The Alex P. Keaton, had been intimate and small with a capacity of approximately 60 people (IDP, 2), the new venue was in a cavernous basement with a capacity of 205 people inside and 84 on its patio (Manager2, 4). The room was dimly lit, with grey stone floors. There was a large bar on the north wall, and a raised area with tables and booths on the west side. The stage was in the southeast corner and had a P.A. system that Glasgow described as “staggeringly underpowered” for the size of the room (TG, 10). The layout and stone floor of the room made for poor acoustics. Alongside a continuing battle to meet the city’s safety and fire codes, something was wrong with the plumbing in the women’s washroom, which led to the entire building occasionally smelling of sewage. As McGoldrick expressed, “APK is damp and smells weird… like a cave! It’s leaking! Have you ever smelt the girls’ washroom? Yeah, it stinks, like a septic tank” (KM, 4). Patrons were able to escape to the venue’s patio on warm nights.

In order to brighten up the dark basement, APK Live’s management invited local artists to paint murals on the arched ceilings and some of the walls of the venue. The paintings were of cartoon worms and tentacles in bright colours. As audience member Megan Arnold commented, “I like what it looks like inside, the murals on the ceilings and the worm thing, I like that” (MA, 1). The large stone pillars that supported the ceiling throughout the basement were painted blue with washed out green or pink drips coming from the ceiling. The stage area was especially colourful. The walls behind the stage were bright pink and the front of the stage was the same blue as the pillars. The back of the stage was equipped with coloured lights, which would pulse with the beat of the music on

\(^5\) The same sign adorned the front of the stage at the third incarnation of the venue, known as “The APK,” when it opened in February 2013.
stage. These decorative additions may have contributed to a welcoming environment for scene members interested in art, such as Arnold. At the same time, these features could have been alienating to people who were not already a part of the scene, or to those with different tastes in art and culture.

APK Live’s manager estimated that the average APK Live audience size was 100 people (Manager2, 2). My estimate is more modest. I observed an average audience at an indie-music show at APK Live to feature approximately 60 to 80 people, and these included many familiar faces or regulars. Audience size and enthusiasm varied and depended on the popularity of the local or touring bands performing, what night of the week the show took place on, and other factors such as work schedules. Based on my observations at the venue, the core of the scene—made up of people who regularly (at least bi-weekly) participated in roles such as musician, promoter, artist, venue staff, audience member, photographer, and graphic designer—included approximately 120 people.

I observed the audience at APK Live to be made up of equal numbers of men and women. Most audience members wore jeans, band t-shirts, plaid shirts, and denim jackets. Many men had beards. Many men and women wore Keds or Converse shoes, or Blundstone boots. High-heeled shoes were very rare. A few more women than men bartended, while a few more men than women worked security. Bartenders and security both wore black. Women filled both management and ownership positions. Performers mostly wore street clothes on stage, although some did dress up with blazers and shirts, dresses, or Hawaiian-style shirts. More men than women were performers at APK Live. Only some performers were current students at college or university. The majority of scene members at APK were Caucasian.

As explained by APK Live’s manager, on a typical night at APK Live the admission cost would be five dollars, with the money used to pay the bands and the door person. Depending on the contract or agreement the venue had with the performers, the bands would split the door money, based on predetermined percentages; or it would go towards a previously guaranteed amount to the bands; or it would be a kind of bonus on
top of a guaranteed amount (Manager2, 1). Often bar sales funded guaranteed amounts (Manager2, 1). This arrangement did vary from night to night, with some operational costs coming from admission sales when dealing with larger tour agencies (Manager2, 1). Most local indie-music bands were paid $50 to $100, with the highest local payout being a guarantee of $500 (Manager2, 3). The average amount paid to touring acts was $100 to $200 dollars, with the highest guarantee equaling “just over $3000,” which included “a very large hospitality rider” (Manager2, 3-4). Hospitality riders can be included in musicians’ contracts and can include food and drinks, towels, and other amenities.

It is important to note that although an “average night” had a five-dollar cover and approximately 60 to 80 people in attendance, this does not mean that the door would make $300 to $400 dollars. Audience members might have arrived before admission was charged—for dinner, for example (Manager2, 1)—and others might be on the guest list. At the bar, the venue made approximately $800 to $1500 on an “average night,” with the bar needing “around $1500” to “break-even” (Manager2, 2). However, APK Live’s manager was quick to point out that “that is not to say that over and above $1500 was sheer profit” (Manager2, 2). Yes, a busier night potentially led to higher profits at the bar, but it also led to higher costs: “this is because the amount spent on product [drinks and food], and the amount spent on labour would increase with the increase in money made at the bar” (Manager2, 2). In total, APK Live’s manager listed 45 operation and production costs for APK Live. Some of these costs, such as licensing fees with SOCAN and the salary of the venue’s booker, were specific venue or production costs, not necessarily associated with the bar’s operational costs, such as food and beverage purchases (Manager2, 5-7). Considering these costs, APK Live rarely seemed to make money after

---

6 Tour agencies operate as promotional companies for bands. These companies often negotiate more money and benefits, such as hospitality riders (discussed below), for larger touring bands. Tour agencies make the booking process seem more professional and therefore can gain a band higher rates.

7 APK Live paid Plants and Animals “just over $3000,” with local openers being paid $200 (based on a rare guarantee for a local act). APK Live’s manager noted that “we felt that the combination of Wild Domestic and Plants and Animals had a large enough draw to warrant the costs associated with booking them” (Manager2, 4). The admission price for this show was $15 in advance and $20 at the door.
paying expenses from shows, with profit only coming from “bigger” or “above average” nights.

**Scene Members’ Experience of APK Live**

As will be discussed, scene members expressed feelings of familiarity, friendship, and community at APK Live. Wallraff said, “it kind of ties in with all of your friends, I mean, it’s the hangout right? You know that when you go to APK you’re going to bump into at least ten people. So it’s always a friendly, welcoming… happy vibe” (KW, 1). Arnold noted that the familiarity meant that she could go alone, but still be amongst friends: “I can go there alone, but the same people are kind of always there, so it’s like, ‘oh, I know you guys, I have friends’” (MA, 1). Musician and Grooves Records manager Blair Whatmore commented that APK had “a friendly environment [where] people won’t be intimidated” (BW, 4). He also noted, “it’s a small community at the end of the day, and you’re bound to see the people that you know. It’s rare to go to a show, for me, of local people and sit or stand through three bands and not see a handful of people I know onstage and in the audience” (BW, 5).

Due to the small size of the scene, many scene participants were both audience members and performers at APK Live, depending on the night. As Glasgow commented, “London has this sort of size thing where it’s too small to have a scene where the scene operators and performers are separate from the audience. That business model doesn’t work here. And so, it becomes this situation where it’s very community oriented” (TG, 16). Because of the sharing of the performer and audience roles, scene members described the community environment at APK as “inspiring;” encouraging them to continue to participate and develop their music. As Shelstad said, “when I’d go out to a show I’d know that there’d be a bunch of friends there, they’d probably be playing and that inspired me more to keep playing and keep going to the shows because it was a nice community” (SS, 1).

Staff members at APK Live also experienced the venue as a friendly and communal space. Remembering his time as a server at the venue, musician Andrew Dal Cin expressed a sense of a community: “it was a ton of fun; I’ve never worked
somewhere that I’ve actually enjoyed working quite as much… first of all it was such a close-knit community and then it was such a close-knit staff. There was maybe, I think, between 15 to 20 staff members total. And everyone knew each other, and everyone was kind of interested in doing better for the scene” (ADC, 2). As a musician and an employee, Dal Cin viewed APK Live as a supportive community.

These comments express the value of community within the scene. Here, community represents a group of people or friends with shared interests, and the values of familiarity, friendship, and supportiveness. The observations of Ashley Desjardine, Music & Promotions Director for CHRW Radio Western, demonstrate the communal nature of the indie-music scene: “from the perspective of CHRW, it seems like a very supportive scene. When I go to shows there are always lots of people out there supporting each other and those people playing at those shows will be the audience at the next person’s shows” (AD, 7). Desjardine also mentions the sharing of roles, which for her emphasizes the supportive and communal nature of the scene.

However, not all scene members experienced this sense of community at APK Live. For example, McGoldrick said, “I find that going to APK for shows almost every weekend is not so much of a community as it used to be. There used be people helping other people and now it’s just like a Friday night piss up. Just go get drunk and watch a show and it’s not about the music to most people who go there. It’s sad” (KM, 1). This comment still expresses a desire for community. Even if McGoldrick no longer felt a sense of community at the venue, she still valued it and therefore shared this value with her peers in the indie-music scene.

Furthermore, some respondents said they felt APK Live was a place that encouraged musical exploration, creativity, and originality. For example, Glasgow stated, “the kind of music that was happening at the APK was more varied in terms of style than what was happening at other places and that [musical innovation] was encouraged” (TG, 1). Glasgow also noted that, “the thing that’s amazing about it [APK] is that the bands are original… people are really taking risks and they’re exploring and that’s so healthy for music in general when that happens” (TG, 5-6). Additionally, musician and former
CHRW volunteer Casey Wolfe commented, “[APK] is not cover bands with acoustic guitars,” noting that “it certainly is an independent music focused bar… it wasn’t mainstream acts coming through there, the London Music Hall would’ve done something like that” (CW, 5).

Moreover, Glasgow noted that in the 1990s in London “[what was important was] how many cover songs you knew how to play” or “how many notes could you play in five seconds or something” (TG, 3). However, with APK Live, Glasgow declared, “it’s more like, ‘how many great ideas can you have?’ is the most important factor to being a musician in London” (TG, 3). For Glasgow, musicians do not display virtuosity via physical performance (“how many notes can you play?”), but rather conceptually (“how many great ideas can you have?”). Musician, CHRW host, and former London Ontario Live Arts Music Director Ian Doig-Phaneuf expressed that he saw APK Live as both a place that accepted and appreciated music that was conceptual, or what he called “cerebral:”

From my perspective, playing “weirder” music, it was actually refreshing to be considered valued [at APK Live]. Often if you play somewhat cerebral kind of stuff or just sort of esoteric stuff, you can get lost. But, knowing the people there and the nature of the space, people being open to new things, I felt that the bands that I was playing with there were accepted and really appreciated, which was nice. I guess it was mainly known as an indie-rock venue, but at the same time, it could facilitate something strange. (IDP, 1)

APK Live supported what scene members viewed as musical exploration, which meant accepting music that they considered “weirder” than other, presumably mainstream, tastes.

Both Glasgow and Doig-Phaneuf refer to APK as encouraging or supporting music that Doig-Phaneuf calls “cerebral.” I observed this characteristic at the venue. Local bands, such as Olenka and the Autumn Lovers, expressed creativity through poetically inspired lyrics, complex pop arrangements, and blending different musical styles such as Eastern European folk and Americana rock. In addition, scene members appeared to take pride in possessing specific knowledge about certain acts, such as details about new releases or obscure openers. Possession and display of detailed knowledge was
also evident on Thursday evenings, when APK Live would host a trivia night. This event is another example of the venue’s preference for the “cerebral.” The display of specific knowledge relating to the indie-music scene directly relates to Thornton’s theory of subcultural capital discussed below, as scene members display how they are “in the know” (1995).

Doig-Phaneuf also described APK Live as a place of musical discovery:

[A music venue] should be both something that is inherently communal, in that it brings everyone in the town together, but it should also be a place of discovery, where you’re given something that you otherwise wouldn’t have been able to find on your own. Whether or not you read about something in Exclaim! and you want to see it or whether or not you have no idea but you have an expectation because the venue itself has provided a context before in certain things, like you know you’re going to get quality. So, I think it was good in both senses. (IDP, 1)

Doig-Phaneuf says that music at APK Live is music that someone might read about in the music magazine Exclaim!. This detail defines his use of “quality” as music that is featured in the Canadian, indie-focused magazine—defining a musical style, particular audience, and deeming it worthy of being written about. At the same time, this comment underlines the “cerebral” character of music at APK for Doig-Phaneuf, as participants often read about it first. Furthermore, for him, the idea of musical discovery is tied to quality. The value of discovery relates to Glasgow’s view that APK Live was a place of musical exploration, and Doig-Phaneuf also went on to say that “[APK] was also a place for people to explore something different, which I think any good venue or finely curated place should be” (IDP, 1). Interestingly, as a “finely curated place,” Doig-Phaneuf puts APK Live in the realm of museums and “fine art” galleries, institutions discussed by DiMaggio (1982), again referencing the “cerebral” value of music within the indie-music scene.

Although not as overt as their valuing of community, scene members tended to prefer and make music that they considered original, exhibiting a certain level of creativity and intellectual achievement in craft or performance. In the eyes of participants, such as Glasgow, Wolfe, and Doig-Phaneuf, this meant the music was different from “mainstream” music and music at other venues. By stating the
characteristics that they value in music and at APK Live, these scene members are making distinctions from other musical practices, which they link to mainstream taste. The preference for music distinct from the mainstream situates the indie-music scene in London within the history of indie music (Hesmondhalgh 1999, Azerrad 2001). Scene members do not explicitly state that mainstream music is in poor taste, but they do express this through their praise of APK as an upholder of the characteristics that they value in contrast to other tastes. For scene members the music at APK Live was “more varied,” “original,” “riskier,” “weirder,” more about “ideas,” “cerebral,” about “discovery,” and “finely curated” in contrast to the mainstream. For scene members, these values in music are held to be superior, which in turn makes those who hold and express these values superior. As Bourdieu states, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (1984, 6). The scene members’ aesthetic distinctions between which musical characteristics are valued and which are not, mark social distinctions between who is and is not valued in the scene.

These values appear to express a mind-body split, emphatically seen through Glasgow’s distinction between “how many notes can you play?” and “how many great ideas can you have?” Through the values of “cerebral,” “finely curated,” “original,” etc. members of the indie-music scene appear to value the mind over the body. As Thornton notes, proponents of the mind over the body worldview often criticize music thought to be more bodily, such as dance, as “standardized, mindless and banal” (1995, 1). However, these binary opposites are not as clearly defined within indie music. Indie-music scenes not only value the “cerebral” characteristics of music, they also value communal participation and social activities. Scene members talked and hung out at APK Live. They performed the “cerebral” music together live, and danced as performers and audience members. For indie, bodies need to be in a room together, interacting. Scene members make ideological claims to “the mind,” but also express a value for “the body.” Scene members seem to use their perceived taste in the “cerebral” to assert superiority over the mainstream, but they still value social and physical characteristics of music as well. Scene members use these claims of superior taste as claims of their own superiority via subcultural capital.
As a communal setting for these shared ideas and tastes, APK Live was a hub for the scene, a central meeting space. As musician Olenka Krakus explained, “I think that the venue was a hub, not just because it was a music venue, but because it was a place that people knew they could get together and hang out with people that were similar to them. Similar because of certain tastes that they had musically, but also just friends of friends or people that dress the same and share certain interests and values” (OK, 2). Krakus’s comment serves as a good definition for a music scene: a group of people gathering socially around a musical centre due to friendships and shared tastes, styles, interests, and values. APK Live was at the centre of all of this. As a hub, the venue was an important site of socialization and community building within the London indie-music scene.

Scene members experienced APK Live as a hub due to characteristics of the institution—it had a stage, a roof, artistic murals, and a certain atmosphere that they found comfortable and friendly. At the same time, scene members contributed to APK Live’s status as a hub through their own values and activities—scene members shared their tastes, beliefs, and values with each other inside the venue, creating a community of shared interests. A comment from Doig-Phaneuf summarizes this point well: “for me, it wasn’t just about the space itself, but about the experience of the space by way of the people and the music” (IDP, 2). Without the shared activities and values of the participants, APK Live would not be an institution of London’s indie-music scene. However, without a space like this to facilitate those activities and values, giving scene members a central and public space to share those activities and values, it seems as well that the London indie-music scene, as it is described here, would be impossible. I further discuss the importance of an institution to a music scene, in reference to APK closing, below.

The Structuring of Meaning and Subcultural Capital

This section explores how APK Live’s stage conferred subcultural capital on scene members. APK Live’s position as the hub of the scene helped make it a site of consecration. As will be demonstrated, this gave the institution power within the scene as
a centralized distributor of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). As discussed in the Literature Review, “subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder” (Thornton 1995, 11). According to Thornton, subcultural capital is represented in degrees of “hipness” within youth cultures, marking distinctions, for example, between those with “fashionable haircuts” and those without, and between those “in the know” and those not (1995, 11). At APK Live, supporting community values, being knowledgeable about certain local bands, or showing musical innovation or creativity (“cerebral” characteristics) contributed to subcultural capital. In addition, APK Live’s stage created distinctions between high and low levels of subcultural capital within the scene. The exclusivity of the stage marked distinctions between musicians and audience members, while also giving the performer the opportunity to display elements of his or her subcultural capital, such as musical innovation.

The stage set-up at APK Live created a sense that more was at stake than on the “stage” at The Alex P. Keaton. Rather than performing in the corner of an intimate pub, performers now stood on a proper stage, which was brightly lit in a larger music venue. I observed performers on the stage to be distinct from the audience while performing. As in Stahl’s (2003) study of the San Francisco indie-rock scene, observations for this thesis found that performers are elevated above the rest of the venue’s patrons, literally and symbolically, through a venue’s stage. APK’s stage literally raised musicians above audience members, while the audience watched in darkness from below. Even the loud volume of a performance demanded attention and made it clear to the venue’s patrons that those on stage were important. These physical distinctions symbolically conferred subcultural capital and power to the musicians over the audience.

Differences in subcultural capital also marked distinctions between performers. From my observations, APK Live could confer more or less subcultural capital by creating distinctions in three primary ways. First, billing order marked distinctions between performers. A headliner was more important than an opener. This distinction is the norm in entertainment and is pronounced in the title itself, “headliner,” and seen, for example, in the emphasis given to the headliner on posters designed for concerts. Second, APK made distinctions between performers according to which shows they were booked
to play. This distinction involves when the performance was to take place and who else was booked on the bill. For example, a Saturday night show was valued more than a Thursday night show, and a shared bill with an act with high subcultural capital, such as Daniel Romano, was preferred over a bill with an act of less subcultural capital. Finally, ticket price created distinctions between performers. A higher ticket price informed the scene that a booking agent or certain scene members believed that a performer possessed a higher level of subcultural capital than those who played shows that cost the average of five dollars. As James discussed, a higher ticket price implied a more important performer to the scene (AJ, 5). Interestingly, here higher levels of subcultural capital (or subcultural worth) directly relate to higher levels of economic capital (or economic worth).

APK Live’s stage could also confer subcultural capital on non-performers. For example, a “shout out,” a “thank you,” or the dedication of a song from the stage often signaled out particular audience members over others. Audience members appeared to be “in the know,” or to know the band, which distinguished them from others. Additionally, any act which brought a non-performing scene member closer to the stage, potentially lead to more subcultural capital. For instance designing a poster, working the door, or selling band merchandise meant that an individual was a part of the show, knew the band, and was thus “hip.” Importantly, as most scene members were active within London’s indie-music scene, through the sharing of roles such as performer, audience member, and promoter, most participants had some level of subcultural capital. Therefore, I observed small distinctions to be important to participants, in order to gain hierarchical status over others. At the same time, some respondents expressed a lack of explicit interest in status. This is perhaps because most scene members already had some level of it.

**Subcultural Capital and Scene Hierarchy through Bookings at APK Live**

Distinctions in subcultural capital between scene members contributed to a hierarchy within London’s indie-music scene. Within the scene, levels of subcultural capital run parallel with levels of hierarchical status. I explore the role of an indie
institution within indie-music hierarchies through the example of a cultural intermediary, APK Live’s booking agent Matt Trocchi.

Trocchi was both a musician in the indie-music scene and an employee of APK Live. He plays guitar and sings in local band Say Domino. As APK paid musicians’ fees and Trocchi’s salary did not depend on bar or ticket sales (something common among booking agents; Manager, 5), he did not have to worry directly about financial success, which gave him a degree of artistic freedom in booking the venue. Due to Trocchi’s freedom and his position as a musician in the scene, his programing appealed to the taste and values of the indie-music scene. For example, Wolfe commented, “I would say 70 to 80 percent of the time I found their taste in music to be very reliable, I could go there without really knowing who was playing and count on having a good time. I didn’t need to see the marquee scroll” (CW, 4). This comment demonstrates that Wolfe saw the “venue’s taste” as valuable within the scene, allowing it to reflect and inform his own. As musician and APK Live sound engineer Nathan Lamb stated, “I think because of the agreement he had with APK and the business… it was like carte blanche all the time as a promoter. So he was really able to do a lot of stuff and sink his teeth into a bunch of things and get a whole lot of experience and not go broke doing it” (NL, 3-4).

Moreover, Trocchi claimed that most of the pressure he felt at work was not financially driven and that instead he worried about booking “good bands.” He saw these acts as “more experimental” than those that Call the Office or the London Music Hall would feature, as the type of music he was after “wasn’t even on their radar” (MT, 1, 2). The pressures Trocchi claimed to feel demonstrate a desire for subcultural capital, rather than economic capital. However, Trocchi was the booking agent of a venue that depended on the size of the audience to make money and therefore his choices still had financial repercussions. Trocchi said he wanted to showcase “bigger indie bands” that people were “stoked on, like Plants and Animals,” while also “smaller,” more interesting bands “to kind of introduce them to other people” (MT, 2). These bookings were on top of the consistent billings of local bands at the venue, which Trocchi claimed played a “super important role” in building the sense of community within the scene (MT, 2).
Trocchi’s job at APK, and the autonomy it gave him, helped make the venue an institution of the indie-music scene. However, it meant Trocchi based which bands he booked at APK Live more on their subcultural capital—and the subcultural capital he could gain—than on their ability to attract economic capital. This element contributed to the importance of subcultural capital within the scene.

A performance on APK Live’s stage could confer subcultural capital. At the same time, in order to perform on the stage, musicians required a certain level of subcultural capital. As musician and recording engineer Simon Larochette argued, “it’s a bunch of ‘cool kids’ booking and… if they don’t like your music they won’t book you” (SL, 2). This negative attitude towards the “cool kids,” reveals the distinction between those with more and less subcultural capital. Those with high levels of subcultural capital within the scene, the “cool kids,” were booked to perform. Those who had power, such as Trocchi, chose who was booked. As observed at APK Live, for those with low levels of subcultural capital, performing on the stage could lead to an increase in subcultural capital. For those with high levels of subcultural capital, performing on the stage meant a further increase or preservation of subcultural capital.

In addition, in order to perform at APK Live an individual had to network within the scene. As APK’s booking agent, Trocchi held a large amount of centralized power in the scene, controlling who was able to play at the scene’s central hub. Larochette stressed that in order to get a show at the venue “[people] had to go and talk to Trocchi” (SL, 2). James noted that in order to get booked musicians had to “schmooze” with him and his friends and “prove themselves” (AJ, 2). This networking meant that social capital was an important tool for gaining a performance slot at the venue. In a way, Trocchi’s position within the scene meant that he could help shape who had hierarchical status and subcultural capital within the scene.

As a hub of the scene, APK Live’s stage conferred subcultural capital on performers within the indie-music scene. Those who Trocchi chose to perform, through his job as APK Live’s booking agent, acquired and displayed subcultural capital. Through this process, Trocchi’s taste and actions where endorsed through APK Live as
what was “good” within the scene. Trocchi appeared to privilege bands that were his friends, friends of friends, and that were to his taste. Scene members then viewed these bands as embodying subcultural capital through their performances at APK Live. Therefore, Trocchi influenced the meaning of subcultural capital within the indie-music scene. Trocchi was a gatekeeper, who had the power to say what was and was not valuable to the indie-music scene, and thus who did and who did not embody subcultural capital. Trocchi’s power came from his job at APK Live and this in turn suggests the power of APK Live as an indie-music institution.

As an institution of the indie-music scene, APK Live played a role in creating and reinforcing social divisions. It did this by structuring aesthetic and ethical values. Social divisions were often expressed through choices in taste and subcultural capital. Those who held the “right” values and displayed the “right” characteristics (those promoted by the institution) gained in hierarchical status within the scene through the institution. The institution consecrated musically innovative scene members who were active in the community, and those with a certain taste to book “good” bands, such as Trocchi. This process benefited those who fit this profile. As those who fit this profile often already had subcultural capital or their values contributed to creating the profile, this process often reproduced existing power dynamics. Additionally others were encouraged to adopt certain values, styles, tastes, etc. to fit into the scene and thus also its hierarchy. Thus, the institution reproduced a particular version of the scene.

Still, many co-workers, friends, and other scene members influenced Trocchi’s values and tastes. He was a member of the scene himself and therefore many of the same factors that affected other scene members’ interests and values, such as other scenes and media, likely influenced him. This mix of influences is apparent in Straw’s definition of a music scene, quoted in the Literature Review: “that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of...

---

8 Although outside the scope of this project, the music of other scenes, and reviews of that music on websites such as Pitchfork, no doubt have a large influence on the music making and construction of subcultural capital in London’s indie-music scene.
differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and crossfertilization” (1991, 469). Accordingly, Trocchi and APK Live did not have complete power within the scene, as other factors inside and outside of the scene influenced scene members, including Trocchi, and their views of the institution and subcultural capital.

Finally, the hierarchy within the scene seems to exist in tension with the indie-music scene’s values of community. This tension creates what Matt Stahl (2003) calls the “double nature of indie rock practices” (147). As discussed in the Literature Review, in his study of the San Francisco indie-music scene, Stahl found that both social hierarchy and indie values of community operated in the scene (2003, 147). In London, both competition for hierarchical status and values of community seem to play a role in the relationship between the scene and the institution. In order for APK Live to confer subcultural capital onto scene participants, the venue must first be recognized as a hub within the scene—as a “treasury” of (sub)cultural capital (DiMaggio 1982)—a place where scene participants perceive and experience their values. Still, if the institution is to single out certain participants as embodying greater subcultural capital, others must be seen as embodying less or no subcultural capital. The distinction between those who have and those who do not is necessary within this relationship in the field and puts participants in competition with each other. Put another way, in order to have subcultural winners, there must also be subcultural losers. Accordingly, the hierarchical process exists in tension with the values of community that helped lead APK Live to become an institutional hub.

APK Live Closes and the Need for an Institutional Hub

On October 9, 2012, APK Live unexpectedly announced on its website and Facebook page that it was closing. Part of the announcement read, “it breaks our hearts but we have some bad news to share: due to circumstances beyond our control we have been forced to close our doors.” The public responded immediately on Facebook, with
over 100 tribute and disparaging posts recorded by this study. Due to its closure, I was limited to only three months of direct observation at the venue. However, its closure provides a unique perspective on the role the venue played, as it allows a comparison of the scene before and after the venue closed.

Venues often close in London, Ontario. As Whatmore lamented, “I think our downfall as a city is that we somehow can’t support a bar enough to keep them open” (BW, 4). APK Live faced a conflict between the values of the scene (a focus on subcultural capital) and their bottom line (a need for economic capital). This conflict led to an internal identity crisis for the staff, as APK Live’s manager commented,

The one disturbing thing for me is when you’re running a venue or you’re trying to support a music scene you don’t want to be focused on the bottom dollar. You don’t [want to be] because it affects people within the community, it affects the staff, it affected people like Matt [Trocchi, APK’s booking agent] a lot. I think there was a lot of pressure on him to bring in the numbers… Especially when he knew that we were trying to support him in the way that we were. I found that I was constantly struggling between just ensuring that the bar could stay open, to provide a space for people and bringing in good talent. (Manager, 3)

The fact that the venue had to generate a certain amount of money in a scene that tended to value community and creativity over commerce was difficult for APK Live and its staff. As outlined by APK Live’s manager, the management faced a “struggle” between desires to “support the scene” and the venue’s own economic reality. James discussed the tension between supporting culture and financial needs at the venue: “it’s a bit of a dichotomous kind of relationship. People want it to be a cultural hub, want it to have a lot of great things going on there, but it has to function as a business, which it does and it has to function as a bar, which means it has to be pretty firm with what it does” (AJ, 1). This tension at APK Live was between subcultural capital and economic capital, as the venue struggled to balance the demands of both.

---

9 Posts were recorded within 24 hours of APK Live’s initial announcement. The collection of posts was potentially limited by privacy regulations on Facebook. Examples of posts include “RIP APK Live. Holy shit what a blow to the local live music scene,” and “APK Live was the place that first brought me together with the people I now call some of my best friends. There’s not much more that I can say but thank you.”
For example, on October 2, 2012, Trocchi booked The Growlers, a psychedelic surf-rock band from California that makes lo-fi music, with a loose and spontaneous feel that expresses a DIY character. At the show, fans of the band were enthusiastic, while people who were new to the band were impressed and bought albums. Scene members admired the band as it, along with its DIY ethic and production methods, displayed subcultural capital through its musical style. Due to these factors, scene members viewed the show as a success. However, Trocchi shared that The Growlers “cost $1000” and noted that “only 50 people came out,” which meant that after “the other costs associated with the show [posters, sound engineer, etc.], APK ended up losing $800” (MT, 9). This example demonstrates that what was positive for the indie-music scene was not always positive for the institution financially. Ultimately, economics underpinned the autonomy of the indie-music scene, as the central hub of the scene required a more sustainable economic model to continue.

Another issue that led the venue to suffer economically was its inability to attract large and consistent audiences. As Dal Cin said, “with only [Trocchi] booking the bar it’s always that core contingent of maybe 30 to 50 people that we would always get out, but that’s not enough to keep a business afloat, especially when you have three shows a week and they come out to one or two of them” (ADC, 2). In the end, the venue found itself straining the money and attention of its loyal audience. As Doig-Phaneuf explained, “I know how exhausting it is for the staff and for the promoter and the booker, but it’s also just as exhausting for a community that’s very small that can’t necessarily support a [full] weekend of shows. They want to go out on a Friday or they want to go out on a Saturday or they work Thursday and you can’t really do all three” (IDP, 3).

In order to attract a larger audience, APK may have needed to focus on other markets, such as the student population. As Dal Cin commented, “I think if the students had been more involved it would’ve been thriving and prosperous” (ADC, 2). However, other audiences often belonged to what the indie-music genre saw as a “mass” or “mainstream” market, from which they wanted to remain distinct. Subcultural capital came from having taste and knowledge different from “mainstream” groups (Thornton 1995, Moore, 2005), such as the “mass” student body. The attempt to differentiate from
“mainstream” tastes made it difficult to attract larger audiences, outside of the indie-music scene. The failure to attract larger audiences was detrimental to the venue economically, but beneficial to the scene culturally as subcultural capital comes from this distancing from the mainstream (Thornton 1995, Moore, 2005). Alienating those outside the scene actually made those within the scene subcultural winners, yet demonstrates the process of social exclusion involved in such scenes. This example also suggests that “indie” no longer means “college rock” as it once did (Kruse 2003, 6).

Operating a venue according to indie values alone did not seem to be an effective business model, although it did lend APK Live more legitimacy within the indie-music scene than other venues (see discussion of Call the Office below). The venue’s financial failure meant subcultural success, as participants may have seen the venue as “more indie,” following Bourdieu’s view of the cultural field as precisely an economic world in reverse, where the economic loser wins culturally (1993, 39). Accordingly, scene members may have held the venue in higher esteem after it closed, due to its “cultural victory” (and their sympathy for its failure), thus explaining why some interviews remained completely positive, or even protective of the venue, after it closed.

When APK Live announced that it was closing Arnold said she “cried,” and “was so sad, because my birthday was in two weeks and I was planning on going to APK to have my first legal drink at my favourite bar” (MA, 3). Dal Cin commented, “it definitely came as a shock to almost everybody” (ADC, 2). Many others shared this feeling, as Lamb explained, “it was a big shock because of the hastiness of the situation… And being part of the staff it was a strangely emotional time. Everyone kind of got that during that last weekend. A lot of folks that worked there ended up saying it was like someone died and there was a funeral and we had a wake [laughs]” (NL, 3). With the institutional hub of the scene gone, what would happen to the indie-music scene of London? Does a music scene rely on such an institution to exist?

Glasgow was very vocal that “today the scene is in a weird state because ever since the APK closed… we don’t have a flag pole to rally around anymore” (TG, 1). According to Glasgow, the closing of APK Live had “two effects”: 
One, you don’t have that sense of structure, of routine. And so, that sort of kills the scene in a way, because you don’t have a place to do it. And secondly, I think not having it discourages people and they aren’t making as much music as maybe they were and they’re not trying as hard, because they don’t have the outlet. It’s been really damaging. (TG, 1)

Glasgow’s comments offer insight into the role of an institution in the scene: a space where scene activities take place, which provides a structure and routine for such activities. The absence of such a space demonstrates APK’s role in facilitating the scene, as Glasgow believes scene members are less motivated to participate. Others shared Glasgow’s feelings that the scene was now “dead.” Lamb discussed how suddenly his activities in the scene stopped without APK Live: “I was involved in a couple different facets of it: I was a sound engineer—I worked there—but as a musician I also played there and the band that I’m in also rehearsed there and all of those things now became not possible” (NL, 3). Trocchi commented that the scene had become “stagnant” without the venue, with events happening “not as frequently” creating a disconnection between the scene and its members (MT, 2-3).

Moreover, with the loss of the venue, respondents felt like the scene had lost its home. As Krakus said, “I did feel a loss in the sense that, ‘where are we going to hang out?’ ‘Where are we going to go? ‘What place is going to be a home to so many people who are in some way associated with each other through the music scene?”’ (OK, 3). Doig-Phaneuf described the effect the closing of APK had on the scene: “it’s devastating for everyone, it’s devastating for the staff, bands can’t play anywhere… It’s almost demoralizing in a way because we no longer have our own space” (IDP, 2). Without a central hub, the scene felt homeless, “fractured,” and “dead” to scene members. Shows that were meant to take place at the venue were “orphaned” off to other locations (NL, 4), while participants were left feeling like orphans themselves. These reactions from participants in London’s indie-music scene demonstrate the importance of the venue for the life of the scene, and the importance for such an institution in an indie-music scene.

Other existing venues did not seem to satisfy scene members. As the legacy venue for rock music in London, many participants criticized Call the Office in particular for not becoming an adequate replacement: “Call the Office hasn’t stepped up to the plate to
take back the mantle that they lost to APK Live” (TG, 1). Moreover, Krakus said, “I think Call the Office is there and people will go there for some of the bigger shows. But Call the Office has always been grimy and dingy and dark and I don’t think people feel the same level of comfort that people felt in, let’s say the patio of the APK or even the inside” (OK, 3). Wallraff agreed and said, “I like going to the APK. The vibe is one of my favourite vibes in the city. I just don’t feel the same going to Call the Office as I feel going to APK” (KW, 1-2). For respondents, Call the Office did not express the same values as APK Live and felt less comfortable to scene members, which meant that “you can’t really hang out there” (OK, 3). The example of Call the Office demonstrates how a reflection of scene members’ values contributes a venue’s position as a hub.

Still, Call the Office likely feels welcoming to another scene, one that may have found APK alienating. Furthermore, although I did not directly study Call the Office, I believe it is fair to hypothesize that university students may have found both venues unwelcoming as each scene potentially viewed students as part of the unwanted “mainstream.” Therefore, it seems that “community” can be a double-edged sword in music scenes: welcoming and encouraging for some, involving shared tastes and interests for insiders, but alienating to outsiders depending on differing values and identities. At the same time, what scene members define as subcultural capital seems to have meaning only within specific scenes and their structures, making one scene’s institutional power difficult to transfer to a different scene. The subcultural capital of scene members seems to lose value outside the institutions of the scene.

Conclusion

A live-music venue plays an important role in structuring meaning and status within an indie-music scene. The centralization of APK Live as a hub gave the venue power within the scene to confer subcultural capital on certain participants. The resulting hierarchy functioned to reinforce and reproduce the values and power relations of the indie-music scene. As those on the stage were often those who already had some degree of social or subcultural capital, the consecration process worked to strengthen the existing hierarchy within the scene. This meant that those in power, such as Trocchi, could shape
meanings within the indie-music scene, as what and whom they chose to display came to be more valued within the scene. Social capital was also prominent in this process, as the social capital of scene members often led to performance opportunities and thus greater subcultural capital through the stage. In this way, social capital can be converted into subcultural capital. Also, those with high social capital, such as Trocchi, where often those who had the power to determine what was “hip” for many within the scene, through the institutional power of APK Live. Through this relationship, APK Live reproduced the indie-music scene, as those in power could display their subcultural capital and perform what it meant to have hierarchical status within the scene. This process tended to benefit those already in power within the scene.

Furthermore, an individual may acquire subcultural capital independently—through knowledge, taste, values—but it does not matter within the scene until an institution of the scene recognizes it as such through the social and public character of institutions. For example, until an individual performs on APK Live’s stage, their knowledge, style, or skill does not confer subcultural capital. Subcultural capital then only has meaning and power within and for the relevant beholders within the scene.

Finally, APK Live’s place in the indie-music scene reveals that the indie genre operates on degrees of separation from mainstream practices and not absolutes. Rather than dealing with a complete rejection of hierarchical structures and economic necessities (following the ideals of the genre), an institution in London’s indie-music scene needed to earn a financial profit to survive, and scene participants relied on this business to perform indie activities, and earn and display subcultural capital through a hierarchical system. This finding supports Keir Keightley’s concept that rock music is often treated as a “‘special case’ of mass consumption” (2001, 127). Rock music is represented as an anti-mainstream media, but it exists—and has always existed—as a form of mainstream, consumer culture (2001, 127). Similarly, indie music is “defined by its concern for the scale of consumer capitalism, rather than by its radical rejection of an economic system” (2001, 129). Participants wished to scale down their interaction with the economic world, focusing on what Keightley calls a smaller “degree” of connection to commerce (2001,
I will address this relationship in detail in the next chapter through a study of what I call an “indie-style economy.”
4 GROOVES RECORDS

Grooves Records is an independent record store in downtown London, Ontario. The store engages with the indie-music scene through its business practices. Grooves operates according to a scaled-down version of the mainstream music industry, or what I will call an “indie-style economy.” By this I mean a set of economic practices characterized by their simultaneous difference from (in terms of sales volume, for example) and similarity to (in terms of commodification, profit-seeking, etc.) a mainstream industry organized around chain retail outlets, big-box stores, Contemporary Hit Radio airplay, and so on. As I will argue, indie-scene participants prefer this economic style, which connects the store to the indie-music scene. As Keir Keightley contends, indie-music participants are concerned with the “scale of consumer capitalism” and therefore are interested in independent record stores, short pressing runs of vinyl records, and local releases—all “miniature” versions of the mainstream music industry (2001, 129). I examine how engaging in this indie-style economy presents scene members with the opportunity to acquire and display subcultural capital through networking and the process of sharing knowledge inside the store. Musicians may gain subcultural capital through the sale and display of their musicianship via albums and posters within the store. At the same time, the community that the indie-style economy creates at the store produces a niche market, which benefits Grooves financially. In this chapter, I explore Grooves Records as an institution within London’s indie-music scene, and the role its indie-style economy plays in facilitating the scene and how it contributes to social and power relationships among scene members.

Facing the Store

As this chapter will examine the role of an independent record store within the London indie-music scene, it will be useful to understand some of the dynamics of record retailing in the city. I observed that independent stores in London are distinct from chain stores. An independent record store is a small, local business usually solely owned and operated by a small group of people. As discussed in the Literature Review, independent record stores are often more than just retail locations: located in the geographic centres of
scenes, usually downtown, they are sites of social interaction and community within a music scene (Kruse 2003, 94, Shank 1994, 165). Independent stores are “day time centres” of scene activity (Shank 1994, 165), which attract local musicians as employees and customers (Kruse 2003, 95). In contrast, chain stores are generally associated with the marketing and retailing of mainstream music. Also, whereas independent stores are central to indie-music scenes, Holly Kruse explains that, “[chain stores] are generally located farther away from other sites of scene activity, their employees are often not participants in local music scenes, and the employees also have less input into the artists who are promoted via in-store displays” (2003, 95). In addition, chain stores often have a number of locations that a district manager oversees to ensure sales and consistent representation of the company’s brand.

From the perspective of management at Grooves, chain stores often “push” music from mainstream record labels onto customers—through displays, charts, and in-store radio—that the labels themselves “push” onto the store (BW, 2, DC, 3). In contrast, according to Blair Whatmore, Grooves manager and local musician, customer demand drives independent record stores more than industry supply (BW, 2). Independent record stores often deal with independent record labels and independent distribution companies, which serve as alternatives to the mainstream industry (TH, 3). In a way, Whatmore’s view positions chain stores and the mainstream as a kind of imperial power, forcing cultural products onto helpless consumers, while independent stores take a more populist approach through customer demand. However, the view of mainstream consumers as helpless in the face of mainstream superpowers is a somewhat elitist position held by the indie consumer and manager, despite the populist belief expressed in Whatmore’s claim. The suggestion of elitism here, that mainstream customers are helpless—or even mindless—is similar to that of Theodore Adorno (1941).

Chain stores in London include one HMV, located in Masonville Place; three Sunrise Records, located in Masonville Place, White Oaks Mall, and downtown; and one The Beat Goes on, located near White Oaks Mall. Large department stores, such as Wal-Mart, also carry CDs. There are four Wal-Mart locations in London. In the last ten years the number of chain record stores in London has declined; there are much fewer stores in
malls and other locations, including HMVs and Music Worlds, than when I was in high school. Independent record stores in London during the time of study included Speed City Records, located at 299 Springbank Drive; Hot Dog Musique and Cinema, located at 256 Richmond Street; and the focus of this chapter, Grooves Records, located at 353 Clarence Street. Although Grooves is not exclusive to the indie-music scene and sells music in many genres, including folk, hip-hop, pop and rock, it does support the indie scene and many of its practices relate directly to activities and values of the scene.

After leaving Dr. Disc, another independent record store, Troy Hutchison and Dave Clarke opened Grooves Records in 2004. The storefront of Grooves faces east and is a pale purple colour, with the store’s logo in bright blue above the front windows. The store often displays posters for new album releases, local and international, in the windows, while show posters line the entranceway around the front door. New and used vinyl records run down the middle island and at the back of the store, while new and used CDs are around the sides. The walls feature album posters of some of the staff’s favourites, including local bands, with the north wall dedicated to rare albums, and local artwork for sale. The north wall also features a large, poster sized photograph of Juno-award winning and London rapper Shad, wearing a Grooves t-shirt while performing. The photograph was taken just a few doors south of Grooves at the live-music venue Call the Office. In addition to music, the store sells some music-DVDs and spray paint, which is on a rack at the back of the store. A blackboard by the front counter lists upcoming concert tickets for sale, while a white board close by advertises upcoming performances—or “in-stores”—to be held at the store.

Many scene participants enjoyed spending time at Grooves, shopping, digging through record bins, or simply hanging out. As musician Olenka Krakus said,

It’s a local record store and a lot of the people from the local scene are either going there or working there. With all the scene members there it seems more familial, makes it feel like you go in there and people will know you and you’ll know them and you’ll get to hang out and talk if you feel like it. You could go there for a purpose [to shop] but you can also go there to hang out. (OK, 6)
I observed regular customers of indie and alternative-rock music at the store mostly to be men. This finding reflects that of Will Straw, that “record collecting, with Anglo-American cultures at least, is among the more predictably male-dominated of music-related practices” (1997, 4). The older male customers often have shaggy hair, beards, and faded or ripped blue jeans. Younger male customers mostly wear their hair short on the sides and longer on top, with beards or stubble, and tighter blue jeans. Female customers are by no means rare, but are clearly in the minority. They often wear high-waisted jeans and baggy sweaters, with their hair in loose buns with bangs. Many customers wear band T-shirts, plaid shirts, and Blundstone boots.

On April 21, 2012, Grooves hosted Record Store Day. This international, annual event celebrates and promotes independent record stores. The day featured special releases from a variety of musicians and bands—such as The Beach Boys, Feist and Mastodon, and The White Stripes—lining the walls of the store. Along with these exclusive releases, the event at Grooves featured in-store performances by local and touring acts. Musicians set up on the small stage at the front window, while customers shopped, talked about the specials with staff, played trivia games on the “Turntable of Fortune,” and watched and listened to the performances. Friends greeted each other warmly and were excited to share what music they had purchased, and eager to hear what others had found. Customers bought new and old vinyl records and CDs. According to Hutchison, it was the most successful day for business in the store’s history (TH, 5).

The trivia games and the discussion of special releases by customers and staff demonstrate how scene members value specific knowledge about musicians and albums. As participants display and transmit this knowledge, subcultural capital is in play at the store. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Sarah Thornton (1995) states that “subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder” (11). At Grooves, the “relevant beholder[s]” are participants of the scene and staff members.

---

10 The “Turntable of Fortune” is a game-selection wheel, similar to the wheel on the “Wheel of Fortune” game show, which is made out of a turntable and used to pick music themed trivia games at Grooves during Record Store Day.
Thornton’s theory of subcultural capital can be directly applied to participants at Grooves, where subcultural capital can be objectified “in the form of… carefully assembled record collections” and embodied “in the form of being ‘in the know’” about specific information about artists and bands, and what is “hip” (1995, 11). These values are important to indie music, as Emily Dolan notes that participants in the indie genre world (Frith 1996, 88) are often “critical” and “informed” listeners (2010, 461, 465).

As a site for the acquisition and display of subcultural capital and staff engagement, Grooves encourages an active, knowledgeable, and intimate experience with music, rather than passive consumption often associated with mainstream audiences (Adorno 1941). Patrons of the annual event discussed the particularities of special releases and tested their familiarity of music history through trivia, demonstrating their active interest in music and an investment in subcultural capital. Record Store Day at Grooves demonstrates the record store’s role in the indie-music scene as the store at once provides a space for scene activities to take place and for the display and transfer of subcultural capital, as with APK Live. At the same time, participants engaging in the store’s space and activities economically support the store, as seen through the high sales of the event. Merging monetary and social transactions in an intimate setting, Record Store Day exemplifies the indie-style economy’s synergy of business and (sub)culture.

**Grooves as a Hub of the Scene**

As with the role played by APK Live, Grooves is a location where scene members can interact face-to-face, meeting people with shared interests and values. Krakus discussed how many people enjoy spending social time at the store: “I know that a lot of people do [hang out and socialize at Grooves], even older people. For example, Kenny will come there every weekend and never buy anything, but he will hang out and talk about his bands and his experience and so on. So it’s definitely provided that familial space to a lot of people” (OK, 6). Some respondents, such as musician and writer Sam Shelstad, remarked that at least half of their visits to the store involved seeing friends or other scene members (SS, 3). As musician Kelly Wallraff said, “I would say I run into friends more so than if I were to go to HMV or Sunrise, obviously right? Maybe it’s the
location of the place or maybe it’s because all of my friends also listen to vinyl and live downtown, but I do find that I bump into people there” (KW, 3). This quote demonstrates that one of the key elements of the scene is that members have similar interests and share those interests in central locations, which in the case of London leads them to gravitate towards Grooves as a daytime hub. For Wallraff, it is “obvious” that Grooves is the hub of the scene, a space where patrons share values. The meetings between participants at the store work to further the community bonds of the scene and create opportunities for the acquisition of social capital through networking.

Scene members also cultivate relationships with staff members through the familiarity developed from continued visits and shopping, and through the dialogue between the producers and distributors of local music. Shelstad’s experience demonstrates this point well,

I love Grooves. I went to Dr. Disc before Grooves opened and Troy and Dave where there and I had a good relationship with them. [They would be] suggesting stuff to me and just chatting about music. Then they opened up Grooves and they just bring in what music I want. Troy is really good for talking about newer music that is coming out. Anything from the 90s onwards he’s just so excited about and… every time I bring something up to buy that’s newer he’ll just be like, ‘Oh, haven’t heard this yet’ or ‘Oh! Have you heard the bonus track?’ and that’s exciting. And Dave, he’s really good for older stuff and classics and… he’s good for new stuff too, but he’s just the man for power pop and girl groups and old stuff. And also he makes hilarious jokes. And the other staff, like everyone there is really good. (SS, 2-3)

Shelstad’s experience with the staff shows the friendships that participants form through the strong sense of community and familiarity at Grooves, and the shared valuing of specific knowledge about music.

These social and community aspects of Grooves make it a hub of the indie-music scene. As Krakus noted, “it’s kind of like a hub in a sense. Anytime that I have gone in there I have run into somebody that I know from the scene, from the city. And then you end up sitting and talking to them for about half an hour, if you weren’t already busy in a conversation with Blair [Whatmore] or whoever else is working” (OK, 6). Hutchison explained that it was the intention of the store to serve as a social space of the scene,
noting, “we try to be a friendly spot for all local bands, musicians, the scene to come in and just hang out and chat about records as they flip through” (TH, 4). Grooves serves as a central social space of the scene, where scene members can talk about and engage with their interests.

The relationships scene members formed with staff encouraged them to continue to shop at Grooves. As Wallraff said, “those guys are very friendly… I always look forward to going to Grooves, because of the people there, very similar to APK. I know that I can walk in and just take my time, there’s no pressure [to buy anything]” (KW, 2). Wallraff felt comfortable in the “friendly” store and was encouraged to return. The store was a social space for her, where she did not feel pressured to buy something. This lack of pressure and the familiarity of the staff and music gave her a sense of comfort. This comfort contributes to her sense of autonomy, which relates to the indie genre’s general valuing of autonomy, as the historical root of indie is “independent,” referring to a level of autonomy from the mainstream (Hesmondhalgh 1999).

The Indie-Style Economy

The following section examines how an indie-style economy links Grooves to the London indie-music scene. The store emphasizes a scaled-down version of mainstream retail and marketing practices. In addition, the management described their business procedures by embracing the same values that the indie-music scene holds dear. For instance, management at Grooves reported that their business engages with community values, and “alternative” or indie music that is distinct from the mainstream. As Clarke said, “we definitely went for kind of the alternative rock, independent market … And also we had a bit of that social thing [nurturing community] going on because we have bands playing in there all of the time” (DC, 1). I explore Grooves’s indie-style economy and the

11 “Alternative music” is a term that was the precursor label for music that is now called “indie music.” This term was popular in the late 1980s and 1990s—seen in use, for example, in Straw (1991). “Alternative music” is music that is an alternative to the mainstream or Contemporary Hit Radio.
store’s engagement with the indie-music scene through their sale of vinyl records and CDs, below.

During interviews, Grooves staff and scene members conveyed that a taste for vinyl is superior to a taste for other formats of music. Whatmore called vinyl the “personal way of listening to music” (BW, 3). Explaining his preference, Whatmore said, “vinyl records were always just cooler and bigger and a lot cheaper [than other formats]” (BW, 1). With this comment, “cooler” can represent subcultural capital objectified in the vinyl. “Cheaper” suggests indie’s desire to maximize its distance from consumer capitalism without rejecting it entirely (Keightley 2001). Like Whatmore, Krakus also valued the size of LPs and explained her love of vinyl records by linking them to ideas about indie music as a form of art: “it’s a big honking piece of art and you get to interact with that larger object” (OK, 7). This praise of vinyl records comes in the form of praise for vinyl’s physical attributes in contrast to MP3s and other online formats. MP3s are often associated with the mainstream due to their prominent proliferation. As Jonathan Sterne notes, “more recordings exist and circulate in MP3 format than in all other audio formats combined. A single file on a single network may be available simultaneously in dozens of countries, without regard for local laws, policies, or licensing agreements” (2012, 1).

These expressions of superior taste can link to claims for the distinctiveness of the staff and patrons of Grooves. Hutchison voiced a belief in the greater authenticity of fans of vinyl, calling them “real music fans:”

Digital is easy, you know for a lot of people that’s the way they want to go and I can see that, but the advantage we’re always going to have is that we deal in real things that you can touch. Being a music fan for a lot of people is having a collection and that’s just never going to cut it on the computer, having a picture on the screen or bits and bytes on your hard drive. So, that’s the advantage we’re always going to have, thank God, and there’s always going to be the hardcore fans that are going to want the real product.” (TH, 2)

Hutchison’s claims of vinyl as “real” music and fans of vinyl as “real music fans” uses ideas of authenticity to mark distinctions between those who are a part of the community at Grooves and those who are not. As I will discuss, in the context of Grooves, these
distinctions are more about the associated social retail experiences of this format of music than the format itself.

Grooves primarily sells sound recordings on vinyl records and CDs. These are physical objects, played on analog devices. Although both can be transferred, through different methods, into an MP3, or a digital, or a virtual format, the purchasing of sound recordings as physical objects in a bricks-and-mortar establishment, like Grooves, is different from purchasing MP3s and other music online. As I discuss, entering a record store—especially an independent record store—offers customers the opportunity for face-to-face social interaction and community building that are minimal or non-existent with online retail. These social aspects can be associated with the physical format of vinyl records and CDs themselves. As Sterne writes, a format “denotes a whole range of decisions that affect the look, feel, experience, and workings of a medium” (2012, 7). He notes that, “the mediality of the medium lies not simply in the hardware, but in its articulation with particular practices, ways of doing things, institutions, and even in some cases belief systems” (2012, 10). The following explores how Grooves’s staff and customers value shopping for physical objects at Grooves due to the social and communal experiences entailed by such facet-to-face consumerism.

According to management at Grooves, record store retailing has faced a challenge of declining sales since the advent of digital music online—with its accompanying online sales, mail-order websites, such as Amazon, and piracy. As noted by Hutchison, the sale of music online has “definitely changed things, making it harder to compete” (TH, 2). Clarke added, “downloading and online buying has certainly taken a piece out of the pie” (DC, 5). Hutchison lamented about Amazon:

Amazon is a real pain in my ass constantly because they have almost no margin. Since they sell such insane quantities, they don’t need to make much money. They don’t have a huge staff; in fact, they use mainly robots, interestingly… They have very few humans to pay and that’s a big part of my expenses here, paying

---

12 “I use the term mediality (and mediatic in adjectival form) to evoke a quality of or pertaining to media and the complex ways in which communication technologies refer to one another in form or content” (Sterne 2012, 9, emphasis in original).
the staff. We have great staff—I love ‘em—but they’re expensive and Amazon kind of eliminates that expense. (TH, 2)

As a large online distributor of music, Amazon competes directly with record stores, which shrinks the sales of local stores like Grooves.

Amazon is not only able to supply customers with almost any music they want, directly and at a low cost; according to Hutchison, the online company has also eliminated the social aspects of a record store (TH, 2). Amazon has “very few humans” and therefore lacks the potential for community interaction and a more authentic human experience when buying music face-to-face. Amazon thus eliminates the social aspects of shopping for music which scene members, such as Krakus (OK, 6) and Wallraff (KW, 2-3) above, value at Grooves. Clarke noted that shopping online encourages people to be less social “as the world becomes more insular and people don’t really want to go out” (DC, 5). With the sale of music online, “robots” and Internet platforms replace humans. The inherent social quality of buying music in a bricks-and-mortar record store—talking to staff and other patrons, sharing music in a social situation, interacting with the physical album and sleeve—is mostly lost through online stores like Amazon and virtual retailers like iTunes. These social situations arise from the sale of physical objects in the store, within the scene.

Against the challenges posed by the online sale of music, Grooves continues to be economically successful where other stores, such as independents like Dr. Disc and chain stores like Music World, have not. In fact, as Hutchison noted, Grooves’s sales have continued to climb since the store opened, with 2012 featuring the store’s highest sales to date (TH, 9). The store has especially seen an increase in the sale of vinyl records. Whatmore provided some “rough statistics” to demonstrate the increasing popularity of vinyl:

This Christmas was our best Christmas in eight years. It was the first Christmas where new vinyl records outsold new CDs, which was drastic and pretty major. New vinyl outsold new CDs by close to 20% and we’ve been used to new CDs being our biggest department. Also, on an average month new CDs would beat new vinyl by like 30% or more, so that’s a 50% shift. On top of that, December
was the best month we’ve ever done in used vinyl. So we moved more vinyl than ever before. (BW, 3, all figures are in units for December 2012)

Whatmore contributes the increase in sales to the renewed interest in vinyl by older generations; to an interest in vinyl by younger people, including university students, scene members, and young teenagers; and to the closure of many major retail stores, which he said creates less competition for Grooves (BW, 2-3).

Additionally, in contrast to chain stores that “lost the game when it came to the rise of the digital era because they didn’t know how to push music anymore,” Whatmore argued that Grooves has found continued success (BW, 2). Whatmore bases this success on Grooves’s valuing and fostering of community and of relationships between the store and its customers, and on the store exposing customers to “good music,” rather than pushing mainstream artists:

With the independent shops like ours, it’s always customer focused and it’s always music focused. We don’t push something because it’s on this record label and we’re never concerned with top-40 stuff. It’s about good music. So, as long as there are stores like ours that are focused in this way, it’s always going to work out because there’s always going be people that want a customer and music focus. (BW, 2)

Defining “good music” is a complicated and problematic task. Here Whatmore could mean music that staff and customers enjoy, rather than music that is “pushed” by major labels. On the other hand, he could be making an argument for the superiority of indie music and vinyl albums over the mainstream and chain stores. Whereas Whatmore critically views chain stores as “push[ing]” major label albums, he said that Grooves “push[es]” local music: “any local artist knows that they can bring it down and we’ll push it for them” (BW, 1-2). However, Whatmore’s comments shift the “push” from one set of cultural intermediaries (the major labels) to another (independent record stores) or from one set of values (mainstream, large scale production) to another (indie scale production).

Still, according to Whatmore, due to the customer focus and fostering of community by Grooves, the store has been able to develop and maintain a loyal customer base, unlike some chain stores and major labels. As noted by Clarke, the valuing of community and social experiences was always part of Grooves’s business plan: “our
credo was always to try and bring back a social aspect to shopping, because… if you can buy all your LPs and CDs online, you don’t really have to leave the house. So there’s got to be another reason to go downtown and that’s to talk music with people that are knowledgeable and friendly, which record store staff usually are” (DC, 3). As indie-music participants have an interest in being “critical” and “informed listeners” (Dolan 2010, 461, 465), being able to “talk music” with staff members is important. Being able to “talk music” can result in social capital through networking and subcultural capital through sharing and displaying specific forms of knowledge, or being “in the know” (Thornton 1995, 11). Clarke’s claim that record store staff members are “knowledgeable” implies subcultural capital.\textsuperscript{13} For the staff, where chain stores have lost, Grooves has won as Grooves’s business practices are thriving while mainstream retail is in crisis.

For the staff, another factor in Grooves’s success, in the face of online challenges and mainstream retail practices, is the store’s focus on selling indie or “alternative” music, rather than focusing on mainstream music or music from Contemporary Hit Radio like many chain stores (BW, 2). This aspect of the store is a factor in Grooves’s indie-style economy. This focus relates to the values of the indie-music scene through its sale of “do it yourself type recordings,” which Clarke notes came with “the rise of alternative labours and alternative music, and also the alternative [or indie-music] scene” (DC, 4). By selling indie music, Grooves engages with the indie-music scene directly and exposes them to new indie music, while demonstrating an affinity for DIY musicians who operate at a distance from the mainstream. Clarke discussed why vinyl is associated with a distance from the mainstream: “the corporate stores were trying to get rid of [vinyl] and the big record companies didn’t want to have vinyl anymore, which is ridiculous. It certainly was an economic thing because it cost a lot less to make a CD. And then they get everyone to buy their favourites over again in the new format” (DC, 4). As mainstream labels and stores distanced themselves from vinyl for economic reasons, it became a way for indie participants to distance themselves from the mainstream.

\textsuperscript{13} Larochette supported Clarke’s claim, stating that, “they know their shit” (SL, 16).
Hutchison explained the disdain for the mainstream shared by Grooves and the London indie-music scene: “I’m speaking in generalities, but a lot of the people that like independent music don’t like dealing with huge corporations. Bless ‘em [laughs], I’m the same way. I avoid the big corporations every chance I get… God bless the cool people who support small local businesses” (TH, 3). For Hutchison, “cool people”—suggesting subcultural capital—are those who “support small local businesses,” scaled down versions of their mainstream counterparts. This shared value of indie culture—part of a scaled down industry—strengthens the relationship between Grooves and the indie-music scene.

Grooves also sold unsigned (or “independent”) musicians’ music on consignment. As Clarke said, “anybody can bring any project in and we’ll certainly stock it on consignment… which again not all stores are open to that sort of thing” (DC, 3). The sale of small pressing runs of music on consignment brings local music into the store and demonstrates the store’s engagement with music that is somewhat autonomous from mainstream production, on a smaller scale than even indie-music labels. As Clarke noted, this is something that chain stores seldom do. In addition, this gives new musicians an opportunity, which creates good will between the scene and store.

By focusing on music that scene participants want to buy and by selling the music of the scene, Grooves targets a niche market. As noted by Krakus “[Grooves caters] to a niche market, which is a market that does appreciate physical commodities and objects… they want to go back to vinyl because of their appreciation of the medium as art” (OK, 7). The indie-music scene elevates its commodities above others, for example as art, due to the indie-style economy. In this way, like rock music, indie music consumption is viewed as what Keightley calls a “‘special case’ of mass consumption” (2001, 127). Grooves’s niche market benefits the store through sales at the same time as it makes Grooves an important institution for the scene as a social and cultural hub. This niche market is based on music that is understood as being distinct from the mainstream, representing the indie-music scene’s self-professed superiority. The practices of the indie-style economy are believed to sell “real” music to “real music fans,” who claim to care more about art than
commerce and who seem to value local businesses over corporate chain stores. As will be discussed, members of the scene associate these practices with subcultural capital.

Subcultural Capital, Hierarchy and Display

When indie-music scene participants spend money at Grooves they engage in the indie-style economy as customers, benefiting Grooves financially. However, economic transactions are not the only exchanges that take place within this indie-style economy. Grooves facilitates the scene by selling and promoting local music releases; by displaying posters for local albums and shows; by sponsoring local music projects, such as albums and festivals; by having in-store performances; by employing scene participants; and by providing a space for scene members to meet, network, and even rehearse. Within these facets of Grooves’s relationship to the scene, the store offers opportunities for the acquisition and display of subcultural capital. As with APK Live, the jockeying for position and the distinction of some individuals via subcultural capital over others contributes to the hierarchy within the scene. This section analyzes Grooves’s institutional role in these hierarchical relationships.

Promotion and Distribution of Local Music

The sale of local albums was a frequent topic of conversation and something that was important to respondents. In general, scene members praised the staff as supporters of local music. As Larochette commented, “they have good staff members that care about local music. When you look at the staff picks there’s always one local album” (SL, 19). Not only did the store “sell local albums,” Larochette commented, “they’ll promote the local albums” as well (SL, 19). For example, Larochette told a story of how a Grooves staff member had encouraged a customer to buy two albums that Larochette had worked on, And Now We Sing by Olenka and the Autumn Lovers and The Best There Was by Handsome Dan and His Gallimaufry (SL, 17). James noted that this promotion and support often went further than expected, “they’ll put a local album on the new release rack. And they’ll keep it on the rack for longer than they should” (AJ, 20). This comment demonstrates a general feeling amongst respondents that Grooves will go out of its way to support local musicians. Perhaps other albums would sell better or make the store more
profit, but in the eyes of participants Grooves is willing to sacrifice larger economic imperatives in order to promote local music. The focus on smaller economic imperatives aligns the store with an indie-style economy as a business strategy, which at once gives the store a niche market and creates a connection to participants, strengthening the relationship between the store and the scene. At the same time, according to Krakus, the sale of local music acts as “distribution at the local level” (OK, 7). Whatmore noted that this distribution “basically, gives local musicians a good outlet for the promotion for their music” (BW, 2).

The association with the indie-style economy through the public sale and display of an album appears to be an important identifier of authenticity within the scene. Clarke noted that having music for sale in the store “kinda makes you feel like you’re a ‘real’ band” (DC, 4). Responses from musicians supported Clarke’s view, noting that they felt like “real” or authentic musicians by having their music for sale at Grooves. Before he was an employee at the store, Whatmore said “it was pretty cool”—conveying subcultural capital—when his “first band got [their] CD in the store,” noting that “for like months, maybe a year or more, every time I went in the store to buy stuff I would check the section just to see my music in the store. So it’s very exciting! It was like a very small step, but a big feeling. Like you’re doing something” (BW, 2). For Whatmore, having his music for sale in the store made him feel like an authentic musician, which encouraged his high-school band and led him to more musical projects in the future (BW, 2). Shelstad remarked that having his music available in the store made him feel more like a professional musician, “it’s good, because all of the music I’ve always done I just burned it and made stupid, photocopied artwork and gave it to my friends. And it’s nice to have another way… it’s just a way for people who aren’t your friends to hear your music” (SS, 3). Musician and CHRW host Andrew Dal Cin explained why having an album for sale in a store or played by CHRW makes a musician appear more authentic or “professional:”

It’s weird, because if people don’t have tangible music to listen to you don’t know what they are. Without a recording people might go, “oh, this is the best band you’ve never heard” and it’ll get some people, but as soon as you have some sort of recording it’s like people think of that with success. It’s like, “oh you’ve done
something, you have music I can listen to.” It just makes your band seem more professional to the scene. (ADC, 7)

Another musician noted that it was initially exciting to see their music sold amongst the other albums in the store: “it’s kinda cool when it’s first in there and you look at all the other albums and your album is in there amongst them” (AI, 5). The excitement and comments of the musicians demonstrates how they felt like authentic or “real” musicians through the sale of their “tangible” music in the record store.

The feeling of authenticity could be due to the subcultural capital participants acquire through the sale of their music at the store. As Grooves sells local music beside favourite or canonical bands in the store, the local musicians gain subcultural capital through the association and proximity of their music with those bands. As Krakus argued, “Grooves not only offers local distribution but legitimization due to the fact that the local artist can be physically placed alongside the national or international artist” (OK, 7). With participants’ music mixed in with albums by musicians such as Timber Timbre or Feist, who embody subcultural capital within the scene, scene members are able to share in the value and subcultural capital of these acts. Grooves confers subcultural capital to local acts through the proximity of local music to canonical artists inside the store.

The distinctions of subcultural capital at Grooves contribute to the social hierarchy of the scene. Although Clarke said Grooves would stock “any project,” noting that, “anybody can record something, put it out, go out, search, and find their name on that section,” (DC, 3) the store still privileges some artists or releases over others. Grooves grants higher subcultural capital to bands by displaying their albums at the front of the store or under the “staff picks” section, in comparison to bands who have albums in the regular section or who do not have music in the store at all. For example, in Larochette’s story of a staff member encouraging a customer to buy Handsome Dan’s album, the suggestion was made because the album was on display on the new release rack (SL, 17). Here, the higher level of display within the store, the more a musician’s album is objectified with subcultural capital and thus positioned as valuable (and often more likely it is that the album will sell).
Through their interactions at Grooves, musicians can directly convert their subcultural capital into economic capital. Many musicians reported selling their music at the store or reported Grooves selling local music (AJ, 17, AI, 5, OK, 7, SL, 17). Although musicians do not make large amounts of money through Grooves, this process still may generate economic profit for scene members. As Krakus noted, “it’s a source of revenue. I mean they take their cut, but they do distribute your merchandise to the consumer and they have a fairly solid following that shop there consistently and that means that by the end of your transaction you also walk away with money because they’ve done the job of promoting, displaying, and distributing” (OK, 7).

However, Grooves did not aim to profit from the sales local bands. Hutchison contends that, “we [only] put on enough [of a markup] to cover the cost of the debit machines and that’s it, so we’re not looking to make money off of the locals” (TH, 3). Still, the store potentially benefited financially from the sale of local music, as the store was able to access a niche market by attracting more indie-music customers and potential fans of local music.

**The Display of Posters and Subcultural Capital**

The display of posters in Grooves works in a similar way to the distribution of local music. Posters of local acts—either advertising a concert, posted around the door of the store, or on semi-permanent display on the walls—work to consecrate the musicians featured on the posters. In the indie-music scene, promoters make posters for almost every show, advertising an event using graphic artwork or collages done by local artists or musicians. Posters usually include the following information: the bands on the bill, often showing the running order with the headlining band at the top and the opener at the bottom; the location of the concert; the time the doors open; and the cost of the event. Additional information on a poster may include the name of the presenter of the show, information about tickets, or a note that the show is “19+” or “all ages.” At Grooves, the staff members tape these posters on the windows that surround the entrance way and below the front counter. The posters around the door are squeezed together to fit in as many as possible, while the posters under the counter—often only four or five—are
neatly displayed. These posters advertise upcoming events and staff usually remove them after the show has taken place, in order to make room for future posters. All posters of this type are for local shows only. The blackboard on the south wall of the store, to the right-hand side of the front counter, also functions to display upcoming shows; however, this list is only for promoters selling tickets at Grooves.\textsuperscript{14}

Aside from their promotional role, show posters contributed to the processes of subcultural capital formation and hierarchy building found at APK Live (for posters for events at the venue) and Grooves. Although the management said they would display any show poster that was given to them (TH, 3, BW, 1), and participants attested to the same (AJ, 20), a show poster informs the viewer that certain musicians will appear on APK Live’s stage. As APK Live’s stage has the potential to consecrate selected musicians within the scene, the show poster informs the viewer that this process will take place, thus potentially displaying the featured musicians’ subcultural capital. Therefore, show posters in the indie-music scene are connected to the system of hierarchy of the APK Live stage.

In addition, similar to the feeling of authenticity associated with having an album for sale, the public presence of posters not only informs the viewer of upcoming events, they also inform the viewer that the musicians on the posters are likely to be authentic or “real” indie musicians. Posters literally state, “this is a band,” and “these musicians are performing” inside an important institutional space for the scene.

The other posters in the store are mostly advertisements for the releases of albums. These posters exist to promote bands and albums. Staff mostly put album posters above the front windows, around the white board that advertises future in-store performances, and near the back of the store, on the south wall above the folk section. Posters for new releases often begin their lifespan inside the store in the front window, facing the street, before being discarded or moved to the walls. From my observations,

\textsuperscript{14} Not all shows at APK Live had tickets for sale at Grooves. It was common for the venue to only charge at the door.
these posters feature a mix of local bands, favourite bands or posters of the staff, and professionally successful or canonical bands. For example, a poster, for the local band Olenka and the Autumn Lovers, is on display beside a poster for the internationally famous Icelandic band Sigur Ròs. Scene members viewed the display of posters in the store as an important show of support for the scene, and this was mutually beneficial. As James said, “there’s a Whipping Wind poster up there and there’s a promotional Autumn Lovers poster in there for And Now We Sing. The big Handsome Dan poster is hanging somewhere in the store… They’ll just help out and not for any other reason than it does them good and it does you good, and they recognize that” (AJ, 20). This act contributed to the admiration participants had for Grooves, viewing the store as a legitimate institution within the indie-music scene. As participants see the store as valid, it may then benefit from the patronage of the scene members though the developed sense of community at the store.

By placing local bands alongside more popular and international acts, scene members may gain subcultural capital through proximity with more widely recognized and popular bands. As Krakus said, this process “shows that a band is legitimate because being displayed with posters that read ‘this album is available here,’ you are placed literally beside all of the more major releases” (OK, 7). The “legitimacy” expressed here is similar to the authenticity gained through having an album for sale at Grooves, discussed above. Scene members appear to value a certain association with the retail practices of mainstream culture, but at a scaled down level, expressing an indie-style economy. Through posters, Grooves may display Olenka and the Autumn Lovers as equals to Sigur Ròs, but this is only at a scaled down, local level.

Unlike the show posters, album posters at Grooves create a hierarchy based on distinctions between which bands the staff does and does not put on display. By displaying album posters of local bands, Grooves’s staff members inform the viewer that they think the band is important to the store, which may confer subcultural capital on the band. Those musicians featured on the walls of the store come to represent the staff’s tastes. As cultural intermediaries, Grooves’s staff has some influence over the scene’s tastes and what the scene views as important, similar to the display of staff picks and to
the authority of booking agent Matt Trocchi at APK Live. Those whose values and musical style match the taste of the institution, and those who are friends with or favourites of the staff members, may gain hierarchical status within the scene. In this way, Grooves helps to structure which characteristics are valued within the scene, and then rewards those who embody these characteristics with subcultural capital.

**In-store Performances and Display**

In-store performances at Grooves often work to promote an evening event. During the time of study, these small concerts featured local and touring bands that were usually playing at Call the Office, The London Music Club, or APK Live at night. The musicians would play at the back of Grooves either acoustically or with the record store’s P.A. and microphones. Respondents described in-stores as unique experiences in the scene, constituting a special event: a daytime concert without the separation of stage, lights, and darkness. Krakus described her experience with in-stores:

> What’s interesting or what’s fun about the in-stores is the difference between them and the experience of a show at a bar. At an in-store, it feels like you’re going to hang out with friends in the afternoon. I don’t know exactly what the feeling is. It’s almost like recess during school or something. It feels like a fun break during the day, which is what recess was. (OK, 6-7)

In-store performances give participants an opportunity to socialize with friends at a musical event in a familiar space that is not a bar or traditional music venue. Just as recess is a break from the institution of school (although still structured by the institution), in-stores provide a break from the economic world and might contribute to the feeling of Grooves’s economic practices as small scale. Scene members perceived these events as being neither work nor play, but a mix of the two. Such events built on the sense of community established at the store, with the potential to draw in an audience to offer the store and the musicians another opportunity to display their value. Through in-stores, Grooves was able to develop its niche market and musicians were able to display their subcultural capital, potentially sell music, and build their fan bases.

Although there still was an audience-performer divide, these events felt less hierarchical than concerts at APK Live. Participants described an accessible experience at
in-stores (AJ, 16, SL, 17), one which was relaxed, “comfortable” and “fun” (SS, 3). The perception of a lack of a hierarchy could be due to the uniqueness of the in-stores as events. Audiences and performers felt as though they were sharing a “special” occasion together, rather than the audience attending to stand in front of the performers and listen. Attendees were participating in the community, actively, rather than viewing a spectacle across a social division, such as at a larger concert. In a way, this description fits the ideal of the indie-music scene.

Still, although respondents described an absence of hierarchy, these events did benefit performers by making them more visible within the scene and potentially adding to their subcultural capital. Scene members understood in-store performances as culturally valuable experiences in record stores. As Clarke said, “it’s an old school type thing; we used to always have bands play in-stores,” noting, “I think it just kind of makes you cool, it’s just a cool thing. People like to come down [and experience that]” (DC, 1). Again, here elevated public display within an institution of the scene is valuable to scene members. At Grooves, musicians were able to display subcultural capital, or how “cool” they were, through their participation in an indie-style economy. In addition, although James said it was easy to get an in-store performance (AJ, 16), it is likely only easy for specific people as Grooves’s staff still chose who performs in the store. This role in “booking” Grooves adds another power to Grooves’s staff members as cultural intermediaries and brings them closer to APK Live booking agent Matt Trocchi.

Conclusion

The indie-style economy at Grooves serves to benefit both the indie-music scene and the store. The scaled-down business practices of Grooves attract the indie-music scene to the store. These practices support scene members’ interests and activities, while claiming superiority compared to the mainstream. The store sells music that is to scene members’ aesthetic and ethical tastes, and creates an environment where patrons can engage in the explicitly social elements of indie music. These communal elements include networking and sharing in an interest in specific musical knowledge.
Grooves’s indie-style economy benefits the store through creating and nurturing a loyal customer base. The practices of Grooves, in contrast to mainstream retail customs, appeal to members of the indie-music scene, which brings them into the store as customers. As a group, indie-music fans still spend money on vinyl albums and CDs, the primary income source of the store. As Hutchison noted:

Sales for independent artists, which have always been our specialty, haven’t gone down. I think it’s been eight years of them going up, year after year—starting from a small place.\textsuperscript{15} So it’s a perfect medium for small bands to get their name out there and that’s what we sell, so it benefits us. The major labels are diminishing, which was never our focus… So we’ve kind of picked our battles well; the nature of our shop is good. (TH, 2)

Grooves is able to gain financially from the sale of indie music and so they stock local indie music as a sign of its commitment to the idea of indie. This also benefits scene members, as they may gain subcultural capital through the sale of their music at the store.

As an indie-style economy, Grooves facilitates the indie-music scene while also contributing to the scene’s social and power structures. Within the scene, the store marks distinctions between scene members through differences in subcultural capital. At the same time, Grooves creates opportunities for participants to gain social capital through networking and subcultural capital through the sharing of knowledge as participants “talk music.”

Vinyl records and CDs play a role in Grooves’s indie-style economy. Although there is nothing necessarily inherently better about vinyl or CDs, these forms of music contribute to the indie-style economy of Grooves and the distinctive status of scene members and Grooves’s staff members because the store is organized around face-to-face interactions and transactions. These benefits and values help reveal the tastes of scene

\textsuperscript{15} A recent article in \textit{The Guardian} discusses how independent record stores in Britain have seen success due to the “continuing popularity of vinyl,” especially from independent labels: “According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, vinyl continues to see a resurgence — 12” vinyl records were sold last year, four times as many as in 2006. While the general music market sells only one in 250 albums on vinyl, one in seven albums sold in independent shops are on the 12” format” (Topping, 2013).
members. Respondents use CDs and LPs to claim distinctions between indie and mainstream musics. Participants mark their felt senses of social superiority through their expressed taste for vinyl records and CDs. In addition, records operate as objectified forms of subcultural capital for either the owner or producer. As David Buxton argues, an object can become important due to its “enhanced use value,” as “the product transcends its immediate functional use to become a key symbol of a whole ‘life-style’” (1983, 429). Here, this “life-style” can relate to the subcultural capital of the scene member, as the record represents, in embodied form, the potential hipness of the owner. In addition, the vinyl records and CDs are often the object of the knowledge shared amongst participants, and can play a role in the networking within the store. Hierarchical status and greater social power can come from both subcultural and social capital derived from consuming records. As a store that sells vinyl and CDs, Grooves supports hierarchies and social interactions surrounding albums, while serving as an important institution within the London indie-music scene.

It is important to also consider how Grooves, as an institution, might be exclusionary to some within the scene, as the forms of subcultural capital within the institution might not be as easily accessible to all members of the scene. For example, women may have less opportunity than men to gain subcultural capital through “music talk” within the store. If men are more prone to buy and collect records than women (Straw 1997, 4), and shop at Grooves more frequently than women, then men may have a greater opportunity to acquire and display subcultural through knowledge and collections of records. Consecration based on knowledge surrounding activities that women might not take part in potentially makes it more difficult for female scene members to acquire subcultural capital, creating inequalities within the scene. As Straw states in reference to social mobility in the rock-music industry,

If the worlds of club disc jockeys or rock criticism seems characterized by shared knowledges which exclude the would-be entrant, this functions not only to preserve the homosocial character of such worlds, but also to block females from the social and economic advancement which they may offer. (1997, 10)

These potential inequalities demonstrate that traditional distinctions between male and female participants in rock music (Coates 1997, 2003, Frith and McRobbie 1978). The
influence this could have on indie music scenes seems highly likely, as the indie-music genre has many of its roots in rock music (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Kruse contends that although indie music might appear to offer more opportunities to women due to its “attempts to remain outside the machinations of the mainstream… the gendered power relations of mainstream music production and consumption were to a large degree reproduced in indie music culture in the 1980s and 1990s” (Kruse 2003, 138). It is likely that these gendered power relations are still in play in indie music and indie-music scenes today. Inequalities due to gender demonstrate how there are non-music related obstacles involved in consecration via subcultural capital.
5 CHRW RADIO WESTERN

In this chapter, I investigate the role of CHRW Radio Western as an institution in the indie-music scene of London, Ontario. CHRW’s staff and website describe the station as a “community based campus radio station” at the University of Western Ontario. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) designates CHRW as a “campus and community radio station” and therefore CHRW is required to serve both Western students and the London community at large with alternative programming to commercial and public radio in the area (CRTC 2010-499). This chapter uses Brian Fauteux’s (2008) study of CKUT, McGill’s campus and community radio station, CRTC and CHRW policy documents, and participant interviews to study how CHRW’s design aligns it with the indie-music scene. As with APK Live and Grooves, CHRW facilitates scene activities, while playing a part in the social and power relations of the scene. What is CHRW’s effect on the indie-music scene from this position and how does this role come to be?

Whereas Fauteux (2008) focuses on the specific content of CKUT’s broadcasts, this chapter focuses on CHRW and its position as an institution of the London scene. Different programs on CHRW cater to different scenes and communities, and thus CHRW does not exclusively serve the indie-music scene. As will be discussed, CHRW is required to provide “alternative” programming to commercial and public radio in London and the surrounding area (CRTC 2010-499, 3-4, par. 12). Within this requirement, CHRW is obligated to serve the various communities of London and the University of Western Ontario (CHRW Radio By-Law). This obligation leads to diverse programming on the station, which serves many community groups and fans of different genres of music, including the indie-music scene. For example, “The Come Up Show” features hip hop music, “A Person Disguised as People” features electronic music, “Rootsman Skanking” features reggae music, and “Wolfwizard Radio” features music of the indie genre (CHRW Radio Thursday’s Schedule). However, the primary focus of this chapter is to explore how the core institutional characteristics of CHRW, shaped by specific policy and mandates, appeal to and facilitate the indie-music scene.
On the Air

CHRW Radio Western has been broadcasting since September 2, 1980, based at the University of Western Ontario (Kopp). CHRW is a not-for-profit organization that receives the majority of its funding from the undergraduate student body. According to Station Manager Grant Stein, approximately 90% of all funding for CHRW comes from students (GS, 1). Starting in June 1981, the station broadcast at 50 watts from 94.7FM. In October 1990, the CRTC increased the station’s license to 3000 watts. In November 2003 the station broadcast strength was increased to 6000 watts, with a new broadcast transmitter at One London Place and a new frequency at 94.9FM (Kopp).

Today, CHRW is located on the second floor of the university’s University Community Centre. Slightly hidden, the station is located down a few back hallways from the main atrium. The front doors of CHRW open into a large L-shaped room. Offices and production spaces are accessible from this main room from doors on the west, north, and east walls. The entrance is on the south wall. In the room, desks serve as collaborative work areas, while couches provide space for hanging out. The walls of this room feature new and old show posters and band photographs. Aside from being decorative, this artwork helps bring the viewer into the world of music and CHRW. Volunteers organize and review new music coming into the station in this room and I observed them hanging out in the space, talking with program hosts, CHRW staff, musicians, and other volunteers. One such staff member is Ashley Desjardine. As Music and Promotions Director, her desk sits in the west end of the L shape-room. The other staff members, Station Manager Stein, Program Director Adulis Mokanan, and Sports and Spoken Word Director Ed von Aderkas all have offices off this main room.

The broadcast studio and CD library connect with the L-shaped main room to complete CHRW’s rectangle floor space. Hundreds of CDs line the shelves and fill the drawers of the CD library. The albums feature music in most genres and styles that would
not fit with commercial radio. Through a door on the north end of the CD library is the broadcast studio. On the west wall is a set of shelves that hold the new music currently in rotation on the station. On the other end of the room is the control desk and studio gear, where hosts run their programs. The studio equipment includes a turntable, a multi-disc CD player, a cassette player, and a computer. This primary studio room has three microphones. Posters for events and shows cover the walls of the studio in an attempt to attain on-air promotion from hosts. The studio walls also feature CHRW banners and certain rules of the studio. Through big windows in front of the host is a secondary studio space, often used for the production of live-to-air recordings and round-table style talk shows. The production control room for this studio space is on the opposite end of the room from the broadcast studio.

According to Stein, the four paid staff members, approximately 280 to 300 volunteers, and a board of directors run CHRW (GS, 6-7). Stein reported that the volunteers “operate at different levels of participation at the station and do different things; some are actually involved in creating the radio side, while a lot of them are behind the scenes people” (GS, 7). Most of the program hosts at CHRW are volunteers (Desjardine and Mokanan host programs, while von Aderkas hosts the news). Hosts choose the music for their programs and operate the broadcast equipment. Some programs include more than one host and many include featured guests, such as local musicians. Volunteers working “behind the scenes,” can help prepare news stories, update the website and Facebook page, or receive new music into the station, among other tasks.

Respondents identified “Wolfwizard Radio” as their favourite indie-music program on CHRW. Many scene members interviewed reported a history of listening to

---

16 This includes music that would not fit with contemporary hit radio; including folk music, “alternative” music, indie music, jazz, and world music.

17 This number indicates that there are surprisingly more CHRW volunteers than core indie-music scene members, which I estimated at 120 people in Chapter 3. This difference demonstrates that not all CHRW volunteers are active in the indie-music scene and emphasizes a disconnection between the scene and the university student body.
and enjoying the program. “Wolfwizard Radio” broadcasts on Thursdays from 9:00am until 11:00am. CHRW’s website describes the program as “2 hours o’ bunch o’ indie rock (including sub genres) with the likes of The Rapture, Broken Social Scene and Interpol and great music conversation” (CHRW Radio Wolfwizard). The program features music from local musicians in the indie-music scene and new music from national and international indie bands and artists. As host Andrew Dal Cin said on air, “I’d say one of our central motives here at ‘Wolfwizard Radio’ is to always try to play as much cool, new local music as possible” (“Wolfwizard Radio,” July 20, 2013, 22:03). A focus on “cool,” “new,” and “local” music positions “Wolfwizard Radio” to engage with subcultural capital (“cool”) and the indie-music scene through its programing. “Wolfwizard Radio” also includes many interviews with members of the indie-music scene. From my observations, interviews often discuss upcoming shows and new releases. Other programs that play indie-music include the new program “London Indie Underground” and “Magical Mystery Mondays.”

Today, digital and social media have become important aspects of campus and community radio stations. Although the CRTC states that, “the prevailing view among campus and community radio broadcasters is that conventional radio will not be replaced by new media” it still notes that “new media will serve to extend the reach of over-the-air radio” (CRTC 2010-499, 29, par. 152). Therefore, the commission “encourages participation in new media” in order to reach “as wide an audience as possible” (CRTC 2010-499, 29-30, par. 155). Stein recognized the value of new media and said, “virtually everything has to go through the web today” (GS, 3). This idea is explained by Desjardine, “you can’t just be a radio station anymore, you have to have a really good online presence. So we have a new website for instance. We’re making it more interactive and working on having podcasts and streaming so that if a listener is really into a certain type of music they can just click on the website and listen to that” (AD, 3). Since the end of 2012, CHRW’s website has become more interactive in its design and layout. The website’s homepage includes news updates through a scrolling banner image of headlines, and a main navigation menu, with headings such as “Sports” and “Training.” The homepage also includes a “Listen Live” button, at the top-right of the page, clearly marking the station’s live-stream broadcast. This was a popular feature for
scene members. As musician Andrew James said, “when I want to listen to CHRW or miss programs I can go on their website and just listen there” (AJ, 16). Musician and sound engineer Simon Larochette commented on the need for the live-streamed broadcast, “yeah, and that’s good because they’re like, ‘oh not everyone listens to radio so we’ll put it up here’” (SL, 16). A vertical banner beside the news, on the right, displays CHRW’s Twitter feed (as the default), Facebook page, or article comments, depending on a user’s selection. Under the station’s Twitter feed is CHRW’s Ustream video. This video displays live web-cam footage of inside CHRW’s broadcast studio.

Other features of the home page include links to the blogs of certain programs, music reviews, and CHRW charts. The website also includes a program guide, information about how local musicians, students and Londoners can get involved with the station, and a link to the London Music Archive. These features make CHRW’s website interactive and informative. The layout and design also make navigating the website straightforward for the user. During the research for this project, CHRW’s staff continued to update and develop their website.

Moreover, the volunteers at CHRW are consistently active on the station’s Facebook and Twitter pages. CHRW’s Facebook page, located at facebook.com/chrwradio, has over 2000 “likes” and hundreds of photographs and posts. This content often promotes or reports on local community events, festivals, and on-air CHRW programming. CHRW’s Twitter account has over 2,600 tweets and over 2,500 Twitter followers. Through volunteers, @chrwradio posts multiple tweets a day, including photographs of events and news headlines (CHR W Radio Twitter). Some individual CHRW programs, such as “Wolfwizard Radio,” also have their own Facebook and Twitter pages. As the CRTC states for all campus and community radio (CRTC 2010-499, 29, par. 152), social media gives CHRW another opportunity to engage with potential audience and community members, increasing the station’s reach.

---

18 CHRW “joined” Facebook on April 28, 2008 (CHR W Radio Facebook). Twitter does not list when someone joined.
In the past, CHRW shared a board of directors with the University Students’ Council (the USC) (GS, 1). However, Stein explained, “when we went to renew our license [in August 2007 (CHRW Radio Introduction, Policy and Procedure, 3)] the CRTC had made certain changes that were required and one of them was that there had to be a separate board of directors… So CHRW now has its own separate board of directors, with the chair being the USC communications officer, by virtue of that position” (GS, 1). The board of directors must represent what Stein calls “four target groups” (GS, 1) as required by CRTC policy, which states: “the board of directors includes campus representatives, including a balanced representation from the student body and representation from the administration of the post secondary institution, station volunteers and the community at large” (CRTC 2010-499, 5, par. 17). Eight members make up CHRW’s board of directors who together create the required balanced representation (CHRW Radio Board).

CHRW’s “Alternative” Policy and the Indie-Music Scene

The CRTC mandates campus and community radio to be an alternative to commercial and public radio. This requirement involves providing alternative programing to mainstream radio, in order to serve local communities. In addition, this policy requires the station to engage with community members and support diverse community groups (CRTC 2010-499). In his MA thesis, *Campus Frequencies: The “Alternativeness” of Campus Radio Broadcasting*, Fauteux found that these CRTC regulations aligned McGill’s campus and community radio station CKUT with Montreal’s the indie-music scene (2008). As Fauteux notes, campus and community radio has an “opposite trajectory [to the] mainstream:”

The inability for commercial and public radio to program content for a local audience reveals an area where the role of campus and community radio broadcasting is quite necessary. Campus and community broadcasting can occupy this space, where commercial and public broadcasting fails to address the local, and perhaps this role also contributes to associating community and campus radio with the “alternative,” as it is a role that follows the opposite trajectory of mainstream radio broadcasting. (2008, 18)
This “opposite trajectory [to the] mainstream” sets campus and community radio stations, such as CHRW, apart from other local stations and connects them to indie-music scenes. Not only does this mandate direct these stations to engage with the local community, of which indie-music scenes are a part, it sets them apart from the mainstream, one of the core goals and values of indie music (Azerrad 2001, Fonarow 2006, 65, Keightley 2001, 127-129, Stahl 2001, 103). Looking at CHRW, the following two sections address the affect CRTC policy and the station’s internal mandates have on CHRW and its relationship with the indie-music scene.

To begin, the CRTC regulates all campus and community radio stations to serve as an alternative for the local community to commercial and public radio. As the CRTC’s Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2010-499 states “the programing of campus and community radio should distinguish itself from that of the commercial and public sectors in both style and substance, offering programing that is rich in local information and reflection” (2010, 3-4, par. 12). CHRW’s internal mandate reflects this policy. As the station’s By-Law #1 of Radio Western outlines, the station is “a forum for the presentation and analysis of differing social, political, and musical views and expressions” and that “Radio Western shall offer alternative programing that reflects the diverse elements of the communities it is licensed to serve” (CHRW Radio By-Law, 2). This mandate is supported further by one of CHRW’s “Principles,” which is to “provide an alternative to music and in-depth spoken word programing from that heard on other local radio stations” (CHRW Radio Mission). The “alternative,” anti-mainstream, goal of the station is made clear by the station’s tag line, “CHRW: your cure for corporate radio.”

These requirements of “alternative” situate CHRW in contrast with the mainstream music industry and thus connect the station to the indie-music scene. As argued by Fauteux, the “alternativeness” of campus and community radio aligns stations with indie-music scenes: “An independent production ethos that comes with alternative music is also associated with the structure and mandate of [campus and community] radio stations… Essentially, both strive for independence from the mainstream music industry,
establishing an ideological link between the two” (2008, 27). Holly Kruse discusses the beginning of this relationship: “college [or campus and community] radio stations, like independent labels, were sites of struggle between the ideal of ‘alternative’ music institutions and the reality of major label power” (2003, 70). The alternative nature of both campus and community radio and indie-music scenes link the two in a similar pursuit to be different from the mainstream in values and activities. In this way, campus and community radio is both separate and connected to the mainstream as its own position depends on defining itself against the mainstream. This is what Emily Dolan calls a “parasitic relationship with mainstream popular music” (2010, 460).

One way that CHRW maintains its mandate as an alternative to commercial and public radio is by programming music other local stations will not play, and in particular, new and emerging music. Document CRTC 2010-499 states that “the Commission expects campus and community stations to continue to emphasize the development of Canadian talent, including providing airplay for the music of new and emerging artists and opportunities for other talent” (16, par. 80). Similarly, CHRW’s By-Law #1 of Radio Western states “Radio Western shall provide alternative programming such as music, especially Canadian music, not generally heard on commercial stations” (CHRW Radio By-Law, 2). CHRW fills this requirement with music from independent record labels and local music from London. For example, looking at the “CHRW Top 30” chart for the week ending January 29, 2013, no albums are from major labels, twenty albums are from independent labels and ten albums are “Self-Released” by the musicians themselves (CHRW Radio Top 30 Jan. 29, 2013). Of the thirty albums listed, seventeen are from Canadian bands and eight are from London bands (CHRW Radio Top 30 Jan. 29, 2013).

---

19 “Alternative music” is a term used to describe music that this thesis calls “indie music.” Although “indie music” has mostly come to replace the use of “alternative music,” as Fauteux’s thesis focuses on the “alternativeness” of campus and community radio his use of “alternative music” is appropriate.

20 The “CHRW Top 30” chart lists the thirty most played albums on CHRW for the designated week. I use the chart as an example to demonstrate the high volume of music played on the station that is released on independent labels or is local. I chose the week ending Tuesday, January 29, 2013 close to the end of the research period for this project. I chose the week ending Tuesday, February 26, 2013 to show a contrast.
These numbers do vary from week to week. Looking at the chart from one month later, from the week ending February 26, 2013, twenty-five albums are from independent labels, five are self-released, sixteen are Canadian, and three are from London (CHRW Radio Top 30 Feb. 26, 2013). Local music featured on these charts includes music from the indie-music scene.

Programing music of this nature contrasts with the practices of commercial stations in London, such as FM96 and 102.3 BOB-FM. For example, FM96’s “Top 40 of 2012” features no local music and none of the same artists that were charting on CHRW in January or February 2013 (FM96). Unlike CHRW, FM96 mostly plays current and past hits. The CRTC stipulates that campus and community radio must limit the broadcast of hits to 10% of all selections (CRTC 2010-449, 13, par. 67). This document does not define “hit.” However, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2008-1, for the purpose to “call for comments on the policy regarding the broadcast of hits by FM radio stations,” defines a hit as follows:

For English-language commercial FM radio stations in Montreal and Gatineau-Ottawa, as well as for campus stations, a hit is defined as any musical selection that, at any time, has reached one of the Top 40 positions in the charts used by the Commission to determine hits. (CRTC 2008-1, 1, par. 4)

The charts used by the Commission include the Canadian Hot 100 published weekly by Billboard magazine (CRTC 2008-1, 3, par. 13). By limiting the amount of music from the Top 40 that is played on campus and community radio, the CRTC helps guarantee a difference for CHRW from other, more mainstream, radio stations in London.

Other policy also shapes the station’s “alternative” programing of local music. The CRTC mandates that 35 percent of all Category 2 or “Popular” music and 12 percent of all Category 3 or “Special Interest” music played on campus and community radio be Canadian (CRTC 2010-499, 10-11, par. 59). However, CHRW’s internal mandates increase these numbers to 40 percent for Category 2 and 15 percent for Category 3
CHRW’s internal rules add that program hosts also must play a minimum of two songs by local musicians per hour. As explained by Desjardine, “hosts have to play two local artists an hour on their radio show, because where else is that going to happening in London? We want to make sure that the local artists are getting played” (AD, 2). As Desjardine notes, the playing of local music sets the station apart from others in London—following the station’s mandates—while aiming to support local musicians.

Respondents viewed CHRW’s mandate for programming local music as direct evidence of its support of the indie-music scene. As former Grooves manager, David Clarke said of CHRW, “it’s so important… how much they play local bands” (DC, 5). As Larochette said, “the local quota is all them, it’s not a CRTC rule. Can-Con is obviously a CRTC rule, but not the local quota. That’s what they did” (SL, 13). This general feeling of support was also expressed by James when he said, “CHRW will play every local band that they can, pretty much, because their local quota and their Can-Con quota just kind of falls into that. They’ll take a shot with anything new” (AJ, 13). James’s comment reflects the arguments above, that the policy regulating CHRW benefits the indie-music scene.

CHRW’s role as an alternative to commercial and public radio, according to specific policy directives, aligns the station with London’s indie-music scene, creating a connection similar to the scene’s relationship with APK Live and Grooves. Fauteux calls this connection “an ideological link” (2008, 27). This focus positions CHRW as an institution within the scene. As an institution, CHRW engages in the social and power relations of the indie-music scene, discussed below.

“Alternative” and Social and Power Relations

As with APK Live and Grooves, CHRW plays a role in the social and power relations of the indie-music scene in London. As with the previous institutions,

---

21 Participants sometimes refer to this mandate as CHRW’s “Can-Con quota.”

22 Participants CHRW volunteers sometimes refer to this mandate as CHRW’s “local quota.”
subcultural capital is a primary element in this relationship. As Sarah Thornton explains, subcultural capital marks distinctions between participants according to “hipness” (1995). Below, I explore how scene members acquire subcultural capital through CHRW. As with the previous two chapters, the relations scene members have with CHRW contribute to hierarchical distinctions within the indie-music scene.

For scene members, being featured on a CHRW broadcast has a similar meaning to having music for sale at Grooves. As musician and CHRW volunteer Ian Doig-Phaneuf said, the station is “[well] regarded” within the city, noting the status of CHRW (IDP, 8). Doig-Phaneuf also expressed that, “people, through human nature, love to hear themselves on the radio, it’s an exciting thing, it’s an exciting process to get your album in there and be recognized,” demonstrating again the status of the station within the minds of scene members (IDP, 5). Musicians who have their music played by CHRW, share in the status of the station in a similar fashion to having music displayed on the shelves of Grooves. Musician Olenka Krakus argued that because CHRW is viewed as “legitimate,” being played by the station “legitimizes” local musicians in the eyes of scene members:

I think it legitimizes the people… the average local participant in London would regard CHRW as a legitimate and long standing institution because it has been around for a significant period of time… So they would probably look at that and go, “woah, that’s impressive, that’s the local station and this band is getting interviewed or being played.” So it helps to legitimize the band and it can help them to ascend in terms of the way in which they’re perceived within the scene; they can kind of ascend the ranks. (OK, 5-6)

For Krakus, a band or musician’s association with CHRW, a “legitimate” institution, can lead to higher subcultural capital in the scene, as this may help them to climb the hierarchy of the scene. CHRW’s charts emphasize this climb as they create a visual representation of the subcultural capital of scene members through airplay on CHRW (CHRW Radio Top 30 Jan. 29, 2013). As with the previous institutions, in order for there to be “legitimate” scene members and institutions, there must also be non-“legitimate” scene members and institutions, creating a hierarchy through distinction. The indie-music scene is based on a DIY community, but it still has social exclusion and elements of elitism through institutions that are somewhat similar to mainstream or formal institutions.
(such as those discussed by DiMaggio; 1982), but at the same time are also anti-mainstream and smaller in scale.

It is not only the association with the station that benefits scene members, but also the association with other, more prominent musicians and bands through CHRW. As James stated, “not only are they playing local music, but it’s playing so much that it’s charting next to Arcade Fire and all these other bands that just hit number one on every campus radio” (AJ, 14). As with posters and albums at Grooves, the proximity of a musician’s song or album to that of a more famous or canonical act—that “hit number one on every campus radio”—can lead to consecration for local musicians through association. This kind of subcultural capital acquired through association was also present at APK Live. Musicians opening for bands with a high level of subcultural capital gained a higher level of subcultural capital themselves, within the scene, through their proximity to the more prominent band and the increased level of display such a slot offered them. Here, the exclusivity of the CHRW chart is also a marker of subcultural capital, as not everyone can be on the list with Arcade Fire and therefore the chart makes a distinction between who is and is not on the list. The distinction between levels of subcultural capital, through CHRW, contributes to hierarchical status within the indie-music scene.

Moreover, hosts were empowered through CHRW as cultural intermediaries. Although hosts did not hold the same amount of individual power as APK Live booking agent Matt Trocchi, they did chose which music they played on the station, conferring certain individuals with subcultural capital, and could influence the taste of scene members. As Doig-Phaneuf explained:

[Through CHRW] the DJ [is given] a chance to almost shift and lend a trajectory to the music scene. Like for me, if I could lend a new or keener interest in electronic music and weirder music there’s a new fan base for that, a younger demographic. That just helps people to broaden their horizons… A lot of the guests or and DJs on CHRW have that and they can shift the focus and broaden the focus musically and it just makes the city culturally and creatively more diverse and more interesting. (IDP, 5-6)
With the “freedoms” that CHRW gives him as a host, Doig-Phaneuf feels that he can influence and inform the taste of his audience. This ability demonstrates his role as a cultural intermediary of the scene.

The process of hierarchicization through the station culminates in CHRW’s Local Album of the Year Award. Starting in 2007, the station has annually awarded $500 and a live in-studio session to the album deemed the best album of the year. All “local” albums that are submitted to CHRW’s music library are considered, with the finalists and winner being “selected solely on artistic merit,” by a juried panel (CHRW Radio Album of the Year Rules). The focus on “artistic merit” suggests a rejection of economic necessity at CHRW and in the indie-music scene, related to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the “autonomous principle (e.g. ‘art for art’s sake’),” where artistic success is based on freedom from economic needs (1993, 40). The Polaris Music Prize was the model for the award (GS, 5). The award demonstrates the role CHRW plays within the social and power relationships within the indie-music scene, as it creates a hierarchy of winners and losers by naming one winner.

Much like the broadcasting of local music, respondents saw the Local Album of the Year prize as a support or showcase of the scene. As Wolfe stated, “CHRW has the Local Album of the Year Award, which showcases the local talent” (CW, 4). Desjardine noted that promotion is the intent of the award, stating, “it’s basically just to get the word out about local music and the prizes are money, so we hope that they use that to continue to record” (AD, 1). However, this promotion confers subcultural capital on the winner. For Larochette, the prize is a reward, which consecrates the winner: “a band that releases an album in London that’s really good should get money for it and it’s going to legitimize it, it’s going to give it airplay, it’s going to help the scene” (SL, 12). The award designates the winning album as culturally worthy, as an instance of objectified subcultural capital, marking a distinction from others. Yet, Larochette’s comment that the winner “should get money” and Desjardine’s note that “the prizes are money” contrast with the notion of “artistic merit” above, and link the station and award closer to the indie-style economy than the autonomous principle of “art for art’s sake.”
Moreover, Doig-Phaneuf acknowledged how the award could be beneficial to indie-scene participants and CHRW itself. As he commented that,

The album is recognized a) so it must be okay, it must be all right and be deserving of some kind of exposure or respect. And b) the fact that it is being recognized is one, good for the station because it shows that they’re relevant and two, that the artist is relevant. And as much as I don’t like the idea of awards, it is inherently good for a creative community. (IDP, 8)

Doig-Phaneuf’s belief that the recognition and promotion of local music is “inherently good” demonstrates the value of CHRW and its broadcasting within the scene. Doig-Phaneuf accepts the recognition of one album over others as long as that album is “deserving of some kind of exposure.” However, the notion of what is deserving of the award comes from the authority of CHRW and, the panelists as cultural intermediaries, through this award process. According to Doig-Phaneuf, the award itself partially maintains CHRW’s authority, or relevance. Therefore, the award produces, in part, both the status of the winner and the station.

Furthermore, not only does the Local Album of the Year jury create distinctions between winners and losers within the indie-music scene, the panel itself functions as an instance of such distinctions. The award process gives those on the panel a level of authority within the scene, which confers them with subcultural capital. The comments of James demonstrate this inequality: “the Local Album of the Year Award has legitimate people voting, not just fan voting through email like London Music Awards” (AJ, 14). Here James sees the panel as legitimate, while he criticizes a fan voting system, which he implies is non-“legitimate.” As argued by Thornton, “distinctions are never just assertions of equal difference; they usually entail some claim to authority and presume the inferiority of others” (1995, 10; emphasis in original). James’s attribution of status to one group relies upon the lack of status of another group. The panel not only decides whom to reward with subcultural capital, in so doing, the panel elevates itself above the non-“legitimate people,” conferring subcultural capital upon itself as well. Through this award, CHRW claims a role for itself within the subcultural game of the indie-music scene.
This comment from James follows a discussion on how fan-voting systems can lead to popularity contests, with him arguing that such a system does not guarantee that the winner produced a “good” album, but that the winner was able to obtain the most votes (AJ, 14). The panel is viewed as “legitimate” because panelists are (supposed to be) informed and objective. To be “in the know” about what music is “good” and what music is not, one must have knowledge, and this can take the form of subcultural capital. Here, specific knowledge is valued over common or mainstream knowledge. The view of the popular vote as non-“legitimate” echoes the view that mainstream taste is seen as tasteless within indie-music scenes. Using the language of Bourdieu, the indie-music scene favours the sub-field of “small scale” production, related to the indie-style economy, in contrast with the “large scale” or “mass” sub-field of production (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 213-214). As with the “cerebral” music of APK Live’s stage or the experience of “talking music” at Grooves, scene members claim to value conceptual forms of expression over physical or economic forms. The knowledge required for the acquisition and display of subcultural capital and the marking of distinctions about artistic merit is valued over popularity marked by votes or sales: what indie-music audiences think of as “mainstream” qualities or tastes.

Moreover, although membership on the panel does not appear to be a regular topic of discussion amongst scene members, (Doig-Phaneuf shyly mentioned he was a juror on the panel), social status is still negotiated through this position. Stein questioned the authority given to panelists and as a result, he introduced a “Fan Favourite,” award in 2011. Stein created this award to give the public more of a role in the process, as voters (GS, 6). As Stein said, “in the era of online voting and social media a secret jury is kind of anti what people expect, so the idea of the voting aspect is to let people have their say” (GS, 6). CHRW now has a juried winner and a popularly voted winner. However, the “Fan Favourite” award does not appear to bestow upon the winner the same level of status as the juried award as no scene members mentioned that CHRW even had a fan-voted award and this process as alluded to as non-“legitimate” above.

By conferring subcultural capital on certain scene members and not others, CHRW played a role in the social and power relations of the indie-music scene. CRTC
and internal station policy mandated key aspects of CHRW’s relationship with the scene. The policy directives required the station to engage with the scene through a focus on alternative music communities. This requirement equipped the station to facilitate and influence the social dynamics of the indie-music scene, as CHRW functions similarly to other institutions in the scene.

**CHRW's “Community” Policy and the Indie-Music Scene**

In addition to being required to provide alternative content to commercial and public radio, the CRTC regulates campus and community radio stations’ engagement with the local community in the station’s listening area and requires stations to employ volunteers from that community. As _CRTC 2010-499_ states:

> The Commission considers that campus and community radio distinguishes itself by virtue of its place in the communities served, reflection of the communities’ needs and values, and the requirements for volunteers in programming and other aspects of station operations. This helps ensure that the programming is different from that of commercial and public radio. (CRTC 2010-499, 3-4, par. 12)

This section explores how this policy directive engages CHRW with the indie-music scene.

The CRTC’s requirement of CHRW to employ local volunteers creates a kind of active audience for CHRW. This relationship with volunteers aligns the station with indie music’s tradition of active participation and production through community involvement (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Doig-Phaneuf discussed the participatory role of volunteers at the station, reflecting a DIY ethic, “it’s like, you make it, you play it, you promote it and so many people at the station do this” (IDP, 7). This model of operation mirrors London’s indie-music scene. As musician and sound engineer, Tim Glasgow states in Chapter 3, “London has this sort of size thing where it’s too small to have a scene where the scene operators and performers are separate from the audience. That business model doesn’t work here. And so, it becomes this situation where it’s very community oriented” (TG, 16). If someone is a member of the indie-music scene, the scene may not mark distinctions from them through their “business model,” and instead a community of participants produces and consumes the local culture of the scene and the station. As
Stein said, “I think [CHRW’s station space] is just another avenue for people to get together and participate in music, participate in making it and participate in listening to it and sharing it with each other” (GS, 4). The similar active audience or participatory nature of both CHRW and the indie-music scene contributes to what Fauteux calls an “ideological link between the two” (2008, 27). However, if someone is not a member of the scene, the scene will mark a distinction from that person, demonstrating again the double-edged sword of community within the scene, mentioned in Chapter 3.

At the same time, the policy directives of the CRTC and CHRW place many requirements and constraints on CHRW hosts. However, many hosts described a sense of freedom at the station. As Dal Cin said, “besides the Canadian Content requirements, you’re pretty much just left up to your own devices in terms of what you want your show to be” (ADC, 3). Doig-Phaneuf expressed a similar view that, “there is a lot of freedom… you can have your own program, you can pick the program, it can be open format, it can be specific and as long as you don’t swear, you’re not playing offensive material then it’s pretty much, you’re golden, you can do whatever you want” (IDP, 6). This sense of autonomy in the face of many rules demonstrates how individuals who identify with the rules of the station—and the genre rules of the indie-music scene—will feel free within the institution. Those who treasure “alternative” music and local community values will feel free to work within these boundaries. Those who do not share those values may feel constrained. This example again demonstrates the ideological connection between CHRW and the indie-music scene through the policy of the station.

Participants at CHRW can receive radio training as volunteers. The training of volunteers directly engages with the local community and follows CHRW’s Mission Statement: “To provide a comprehensive training program for volunteers from Western and the greater London area and to deliver high quality campus/community radio programming, production and broadcasting” (CHRW Radio Mission). Dal Cin discussed his experience learning broadcasting skills:

I had never done anything like it before and the way that they go about training you is great, because you get to go and actually sit in on a show and watch people work the boards. You have other avenues of opportunities too, if you don’t want
to be a show host, if you want to be part of the news team or join the music production department, they branch out that way. I went for host position. But the whole training process is great because you get hands on experience with how everything works. (ADC, 3)

Teaching volunteers broadcasting skills is important to keep CHRW operational with programs on the air. At the same time, this training follows the station’s mandate to reflect the community as it gives community members the skills and the platform to present their “social, political, and musical views and expressions” (CHRW Radio By-Law).

Through training, volunteers are also able to learn about the indie-music scene. Desjardine discussed this aspect of the training method:

When an inspiring host comes in and they want to have a music show they have to go through a certain training process and part of that has to do with the music aspect. I will sit down with them and I will ask them for bands that they’re interested in and I make recommendations of local music based on that that might be of interest to them. I also give them websites to check out, like maybe LondonFuse,23 as well as venues where they’re guaranteed to find out about the local scene. We do this to try and get them out there and experiencing it as opposed to just playing it on the radio because you want them to experience it fully. (AD, 2)

As with the training of technical skills, by teaching station volunteers what institutions and musicians make up the indie-music scene (or another scene in London), Desjardine keeps CHRW involved with local music. At the same time, this training offers volunteers the knowledge and skills to enter the indie-music scene, benefiting them through social and subcultural capital. Learning about local scenes might be especially important to student volunteers, who might not come from London. As Stein explained, “it’s great being able to see students who parachuted in from another city and are in the ‘Western

---

23 LondonFuse is a community driven website, which combines elements of a social network style website and a magazine style website. The site provides information on upcoming local shows and events, music and art reviews, London commentary, and other items related to London’s indie culture.
Bubble, who know nothing about London, find out who’s interested in what they’re interested in and maybe make those connections outside of Western through CHRW” (GS, ). Through CHRW, students might be able to meet new people and gain the skills and social capital to engage with these new people. This section now turns to the social and subcultural opportunities CHRW offers volunteers, and how the institution can facilitate the entrance of volunteers into the indie-music scene.

“Community” and Entrance into the Scene through Social and Subcultural Capital

Subcultural capital involves an individual being “in the know” (Thornton 1995, 11). The knowledge about the indie-music scene that individuals are able to acquire through institutions may contribute to their subcultural capital within the scene. In a sense, this knowledge, or subcultural capital, is “learned,” but the process is closer to assimilation than formal education. For instance, interacting with scene members or volunteers at CHRW, or listening to indie-music programs on the radio can inform an individual of what scene members consider “hip” or “fashionable” within the scene, conferring subcultural capital (Thornton 1995, 11-12). Watching and hearing a band on stage at APK Live or viewing posters on the walls of Grooves works in a similar way, as individuals come to know what is valued, and what is not, within the scene. In addition, the opportunity to network with scene members can create social capital for volunteers. As volunteers engage with scene members and activities, they gain knowledge, form social bonds and similar tastes, leading to membership within the scene. In this way, volunteers are able to negotiate or navigate their entrances into the scene via the subcultural and social capital acquired through institutions. Shelstad commented that many people involved with CHRW became active in the scene: “A lot of our friends are the hosts of these shows or guests on the shows and the hosts are always coming out to the events and shows” (SS, 5). CHRW’s relationship with the indie-music scene is an

---

24 The “Western Bubble” is a phrase used at The University of Western Ontario related to the traditional town vs. gown social division. The “Western Bubble” is the world students become immersed in, often causing them to not experience, or in a way forget, the world outside the campus. The term often carries negative connotations relating to the ignorance of students.
example of how institutions can facilitate an individual’s entrance into a scene through gaining and utilizing subcultural and social capitals.

For example, musician and former CHRW volunteer Casey Wolfe said he first met members of the scene “face-to-face” through CHRW, noting, “through volunteering at CHRW I met a lot of people because I was Live-to-Air Coordinator for a while. For example, I remember meeting Olenka and saying, ‘hey would you come to do a live to air?’ I met many people that way” (CW, 2). Wolfe’s experience as a volunteer at CHRW gave him the opportunity to meet members of the scene and eventually enter the indie-music scene. Arguably, Wolfe’s status as the Live-to-Air Coordinator at the station also contributed to his social capital, as the station provided a vehicle for his engagement and entrance to the scene.

As an entrance point for and space of scene networking, CHRW functions as a node of the scene, a space where individuals are able to learn about the scene, interact with the scene, and meet scene members. Geoff Stahl discusses the role of campus and community radio as a node in the scene in Montreal:

[“T]hrough the university, the musically-inclined can find their way to campus-based community radio, a pluralistic social space which acts as a transitional zone bringing together a university community and the larger urban community. Community radio is a place where students, activists, and artists/musicians not affiliated with the university gather and where diversity and difference are positively charged, its heterogeneity marking its distinction from the mainstream or dominant culture. (2001, 108)

For Stahl (2001), a campus and community radio station acts as a gathering space for like-minded people, distinct from the mainstream, making it a “transitional zone” or facilitating space of the scene. These characteristics led Wolfe to call CHRW an “embassy of the scene at the university” (CW, 3).

Individuals can also obtain knowledge about the scene by listening to the station’s broadcasts. Although this chapter focuses mostly on CHRW as an institution and not specific content of its broadcasts, certain programs, such as “Wolfwizard Radio,” can relay knowledge about the indie-music scene. This knowledge can lead to subcultural capital, which can lead to entrance into the scene. Current scene members can also update
their knowledge of the scene by listening to CHRW, which can lead to the maintenance of their subcultural capital. For example, musician and former CHRW host Sam Shelstad spoke of how he was able to learn about new bands by listening to CHRW and specifically “Wolfwizard Radio:”

Sometimes there’s so many shows going on at APK that I’ll hear all these names and they don’t mean anything to me. So then, you just hear it on the radio and then you go, “oh, this is great, what is this?” And then you hear the name and you go “oh, they’re playing at APK or Hot Dog”… That’s how I first heard The Elwins. I’d always heard of them playing and never made the shows, but then I heard them on “Wolfwizard Radio” and they’re great. (SS, 6-7)

Shelstad’s experience demonstrates how a scene member can maintain his or her knowledge of the scene through CHRW. Once this knowledge is applied to social situations and displayed, Shelstad is able to maintain or expand his subcultural capital.

Due to the CRTC’s policy and CHRW’s internal mandate to engage with the local community through programming and volunteers, the station facilitates participants’ entrance into the indie-music scene. Through volunteer training individuals are able to learn skills and information, which confers them with subcultural and social capital. This capital provides them with the tools to enter the indie-music scene, while the station as a node of the scene provides them with the space to do so. At the same time, subcultural and social capitals are involved in the jockeying for position within the sub-field of the indie-music scene. For instance, those with more social capital than other individuals would likely be at an advantage within the social hierarchy. Similar inequalities result from possession of subcultural capital. Previous chapters discuss these power relations in detail in regards to APK Live and Grooves. Although these power relations are also at play with CHRW, this section sought to understand how respondents were able gain entrance into the indie-music scene through one institution. One of their roles within the social and power relations of the indie-music scene is to facilitate participants’ entrance into the scene.
The Reach of Subcultural Capital

Thornton notes, “subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder” (1995, 11). Accordingly, away from the eyes of relevant beholders the subcultural capital of its owner might decline. This section discusses how the subcultural capital of scene members is largely limited to the indie-music scene and has limited convertibility beyond the world of indie music. For example, CHRW volunteers might need to gain different knowledge and skills in order to enter the metal scene of London, rather than the indie-music scene; or a musician may have to dress differently and play stylistically different music in order to display subcultural capital within the electronic dance music scene. The specifics of the indie-music scene, based on a desire to be “alternative” from the mainstream or from mass society (Keightley 2001, Stahl 2001), make the scene an exclusive community to join, while also limiting the scene’s impact upon those outside it.

As discussed above, CHRW is required to serve the various communities of London and the University of Western Ontario (CRTC 2010-499, 3–4, par. 12, CHRW Radio). This mandate leads to diverse programming on the station. However, as argued below, this diversity seems to lead to selective and even limited listening to the station, at least within the indie-music scene. Respondents expressed listening to mostly indie-music programing, with occasional listening to another genre or program.

For example, Dal Cin explained his listening habits as such:

There’s a lot of content that’s not specifically for me. I know there’s a ton of hip-hop and jazz programs that I don’t listen to all the time. At one time, two years ago I guess, I’d listen to the jazz programs late at night when doing homework. But it [my listening] really depends on the programming during the day. There’s a lot of great programs, like Ashley does the “Magical Mystery Mondays,” which is great. So, I find that because of how eclectic the station is, I find myself listening to a show that I want to hear. (ADC, 4)

Dal Cin’s listening habits are limited to only programs that feature music he wants to hear. This creates an “echo chamber” effect, which mostly perpetuates the listener’s existing beliefs and values, rather than introducing new ones. “Magical Mystery
Mondays” is a program that features primarily indie music, with some songs from other related genres (CHRW Radio Thursday’s Schedule). Musician Kelly Wallraff also expressed limited listening habits. She said that she almost exclusively listens to “Wolfwizard Radio” on CHRW and classical music on CBC (KW, 3). Others, such as Larochette and James, mostly listened to programs that feature indie and rock music, including “Wolfwizard Radio” and “Band-a-Loop Radio” (SL, 16 and AJ, 13). This “echo chamber” effect of the institution has the potential to reproduce the scene in a similar way to the process of booking at APK Live that reproduced a particular version of the scene, as the institution structures the scene in a certain way.

In addition, these limited listening practices of indie-music scene participants present the possibility that they have a limited knowledge of other music genres and scenes (at least through CHRW). As Shelstad said, “CHRW caters to a lot of communities and I guess I just know the one of them” (SS, 5-6).

The size of CHRW’s audience is a limiting factor on the subcultural capital of scene members. For example, Krakus noted, “because CHRW has a fairly local listening range in a lot of ways they cater to a small segment of the national population” and therefore the station has little effect nationally (OK, 4). Even in the local market CHRW’s reach is limited, as Krakus noted, “CHRW might make some people in the city aware of what you’re doing, but it’s a small percentage of Londoners because there are lots of people who live in London who are probably ignorant of the fact that there’s a radio station based out of CHRW” (OK, 5). These additional limits of CHRW demonstrate how geographically small the subcultural capital reach of scene members can be, not extending too far outside of the indie-music scene itself.

Still, acknowledgement of scene members’ subcultural capital is not strictly limited to the local indie-music scene. The subcultural and social capital acquired and displayed within the indie-music scene can be converted, in some ways, outside the indie-music scene. For instance, respondents noted how CHRW is a part of a national network of campus radio stations. As Wolfe said, “CHRW is part of a vast network of campus radio stations across the country and they participate in disseminating that music to those
radio stations. So, if you’re a local band and you get some airplay on CHRW you can be getting nationwide attention and airplay which is great” (CW, 4). In addition, others noted how charting on CHRW could lead to national forms of subcultural capital. Although Krakus questioned the reach of CHRW, she also said,

The *Earshot* charting system is probably the most beneficial promotion that CHRW offers to the local artists because it legitimizes the band because the band is then promoted to the individuals who are actually making decisions about airplay at the college stations nationally. These are acts going out that have the vote of confidence of this local radio station. (OK, 4)

High subcultural capital within London’s indie-music scene can thus be converted, to a certain degree, to subcultural capital on a national level if other stations are influenced by the networked charting system. As Doig-Phaneuf said, “if an artist does well locally they can essentially chart in *Exclaim!* or in the campus charts [*Earshot*]” (IDP, 5). Finally, as the Local Album of the Year prize is $500, this award is an example of the direct conversion of subcultural capital into economic capital.

**Conclusion**

CHRW’s policy requirements align the station with the indie-music scene, at once appealing to and facilitating the scene. Interviews with Stein and Desjardine reflected this. As Stein said, “the role of CHRW has been to bring people together [in the community]… and try to expose [local] music” (GS, 4). While Desjardine said, “our role, I feel, is to help the artists… by getting the word out and getting people talking about local music” (AD, 1). At the same time, CHRW’s practices can attract a certain type of volunteer who may wish to support or become involved with the indie-music scene (as Stahl describes above; 2001), which can also benefit the scene. As with the other two institutions studied in this thesis, CHRW not only facilitates scene activities, but plays a role in the scene’s hierarchical processes as well. Participants are able to acquire and display subcultural capital through CHRW. This process contributes to the social hierarchy of the indie-music scene.

CHRW offers interesting insights into the role of an institution, of subcultural capital, and of social capital in an individual’s entrance into a scene. Volunteers at
CHRW are able to gain subcultural and social capitals through training and networking at the station, which they can use to enter the indie-music scene. Once “inside,” further participation within the scene can lead to more subcultural and social capital for individuals, as participants are able to gain more knowledge and social connections. Subcultural and social capitals confer status on participants within the scene and therefore entrance into the scene may be facilitated through this indie institution.

This status is mostly limited to the indie-music scene itself. Local institutions of the indie-music scene tend to be constrained by their reach (for example, local radio broadcast area) and by the audience or patronage of the institution. Dal Cin questioned the power of CHRW to reach outside the scene. As he said, “it’s weird though, because once you’re a part of it you kind of know about all the events that they’re doing, so it’s hard to empirically judge whether you’re actually reaching an audience or if you just know about the scene because you’re a part of it” (ADC, 4). CHRW hosts can feel like the station gives them a platform to promote the scene and encourage participation. However, as Dal Cin eludes, show hosts may only be reiterating what scene members already know, or at least, already believe. In a way, CHRW and its audience create an echo chamber, which reproduces the ideology of the scene, while limiting the reach of participants’ status.

Shelstad did learn new music through CHRW, as he heard The Elwins for the first time on “Wolfwizard Radio.” However, the program did not change his values or beliefs, but likely reinforced them, just as APK Live’s stage can be seen to do.
6 CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the role of three institutions in London, Ontario’s indie-music scene: APK Live, Grooves Records, and CHRW Radio Western. I hope that these case studies may contribute to a greater understanding of indie-music scenes and indie institutions more generally.

Indie-music institutions are central to the formation of indie-music scenes. Indie-music scenes involve social groups whose members have similar tastes and styles, and who value a participatory culture where scene members play various roles within indie-music activities. Indie institutions provide the spaces and facilities for these social activities and shared values to take place. Whether they involve a musical performance, the sale of a local album, or talking about music in a communal space, institutions support these activities. London musician Olenka Krakus perhaps best describes the role of an institution, calling APK Live a “hub” she explains that, “I think that the venue was a hub, not just because it was a music venue, but because it was a place that people knew they could get together and hang out with people that were similar to them. Similar because of certain tastes that they had musically, but also just friends of friends or people that dress the same and share certain interests and values” (OK, 2).

Within indie-music scenes, participant activities often follow a DIY aesthetic and ethic defined through indie music’s rejection of mainstream music and business practices. Geoff Stahl defines indie as follows: “independent in the context of musicmaking means both a mode of musical production separate from the mainstream recording industry as well as a combined set of social and aesthetic practices” (2001, 103). I found indie institutions to appeal to these aesthetic and ethical distinctions from the mainstream, helping mark them as important or “legitimate” parts of the scene for scene members. Each institution I studied fulfilled this role in a slightly different way. By engaging in the activities and values of indie-music participants, the institutions became sites of consecration within London’s indie-music scene, conferring subcultural capital onto scene members. Although I found respondents to treasure notions of community, they
used their subcultural capital to negotiate and navigate their way through the hierarchy of the scene, in order to engage in scene activities, sell albums, and book shows.

When this study began, APK Live was arguably the epicentre of the indie-music scene in London, before it closed in October 2012. As an institutional hub of the scene, the live-music venue was the space of shared interests, tastes, styles, and collective activities and beliefs. London’s indie-music scene gathered at this institution to perform, listen, watch, socialize, and network. As Kruse discusses, live music venues are the social spaces of a scene, where the performers and audience members come together in one physical space (2003, 102). Through APK Live, I discovered that institutions are critical to community building and the development of shared values and interests within scenes. At the same time, as a primary hub of the scene, APK Live was the centre of hierarchical distinctions within the indie-music scene, since, as Matt Stahl notes, institutions “are in the business of hierarchizing” (2003, 140). Differing levels of subcultural capital distinguished scene members within the venue. For instance, performers on APK Live’s stage who displayed what Ian Doig-Phaneuf called “cerebral” qualities (IDP, 1) through their music where consecrated with greater subcultural capital than those who did not display such qualities.

This example reveals the structural role institutions hold within indie-music scenes. APK Live played a role in creating and reinforcing the qualities and values associated with subcultural capital within the scene more generally. Who and what appeared on APK Live’s stage had greater potential to be consecrated within the scene. Scene members viewed what was on the stage as “good” within the scene, and if a musician wanted to be “good,” they had to perform according to the qualities and values of APK Live (and network with APK Live booking agent Matt Trocchi). Those who held these qualities—who made “cerebral” music, for example—where consecrated through the institution, conferred with subcultural capital and greater status in the hierarchy of the scene. Through this system, the institution reinforced and reproduced the social and power relations of the scene. Through this organizational and structural role, APK Live was similar to the cultural institutions in Boston discussed by Paul DiMaggio (1982).
Indeed, I understand an indie institution as a kind of art gallery within an indie-music scene, publically displaying the scene’s cultural values and preferred tastes.

Still, this system is not stable as scenes are always changing. In a scene where musical innovation, discovery, and exploration are valued, what is “good” within the scene is always transforming and therefore consecrated musicians are often those who are able to change and stay ahead of the curve. With this in mind, the institution may reproduce the scene, but it is reproducing a process that is always in flux.

Grooves Records is located in the middle of the indie-music scene, in downtown London, Ontario. Like independent record stores in other cities (Kruse 2003, 94, Shank 1994, 165), Grooves is a daytime hub of the scene. Through its focus on independent labels, local music, local taste, and community driven niche markets, Grooves provides the scene with a scaled-down version of the mainstream music industry. These small-scale business practices contribute to the store’s indie-style economy, as they reflect the indie-music scene’s desire for small-scale economics that are distinct from the mainstream.

In a similar fashion to CHRW’s policy requirements, Grooves’s indie-style economy attracts and supports the scene. At the store, patrons network with staff and other scene members, and share knowledge about music. Grooves also sells local albums and displays posters advertising local concerts and albums on its walls. Through these interactions at the store, scene members are able to display and acquire subcultural capital, which contributes to their hierarchical status within the scene. For example, Grooves confers subcultural capital onto scene members by creating an apparent association between local and canonical bands. For respondents, the public display of the band marks the musicians as authentic within the scene. Scene members believe the musicians are in a “real” band through their public relationship with the institution. A scene member may have knowledge, or musical skills, or fashionable style, but is unlikely to be considered authentic or “real” until validated via the relevant institutions.

The policy directives of CHRW Radio Western position the station as an important institution within London’s indie-music scene. The campus and community
radio station is required to broadcast alternative programing to commercial and public radio stations in London, and to engage with the local community through content and volunteer opportunities. CRTC policy and the station’s internal mandate stipulate these requirements. These directives align the station with the indie-music scene’s taste for “alternative” or indie music and community participation, which is distinct from the mainstream. Through the station’s involvement with the scene, CHRW can create distinctions between who is and is not “hip” through airplay, or lack thereof, on the station. This authority makes CHRW an arbiter of subcultural capital. As I argued, CHRW’s Local Album of the Year Award exemplifies this relationship. Moreover, as volunteers, individuals are able to acquire subcultural and social capital through their training and positions at the station. This subcultural and social capital facilitates volunteers’ membership and circulation in the scene. Scene members can use their acquired subcultural and social capital to navigate the hierarchy of the scene. Through the knowledge learned and social connections made at CHRW, individuals may move from the margins of the scene towards the centre.

The indie-music scene is both inclusive and exclusive. Anti-mainstream and communal values attract some individuals and alienate others. For example, with CHRW participants reported listening to some programs and avoiding others based on their individual tastes. At the same time, some people reported feeling a sense of “freedom” as CHRW hosts, following the station’s policy directives, while others might feel constrained. This is what I call the “double-edged sword” of the indie-music scene in Chapter 3, or what Matt Stahl calls the “double nature of indie rock practices” (2003, 147). There is a sense of community and inclusion, but also of exclusion because of the distinctions between insider and outsider that define the community. Yes, participants value community, but they value their particular type of community. As with institutions in more formal art worlds (DiMaggio 1982), indie institutions can structure these distinctions. Through institutions, individuals can learn how to be included in the scene, how to gain subcultural capital. This makes current scene members feel like the scene is very open and inclusive. However, if participants do not follow or relate to the genre rules and conventions of the indie-music scene, upheld by institutions, they will not be able to enter the scene as easily or comfortably.
This thesis opens up further questions for me, which I would like to address with future projects. First, how do different elements of identity, such as gender or class, affect an individual’s experience of institutions and hierarchy within a scene? This study focused mostly on scene members as a single, coherent group. Future studies could inquire into specific inequalities within scenes based on elements other than subcultural capital and possession of the “right” musical characteristics. Is there a “right” gender or class within indie-music scenes, for example? Is subcultural capital more readily available to men than it is to women? Secondly, do the institutions of other genres, such as electronic dance music or hip-hop, operate within those scenes in the same manner? In addition, the study of three institutions offered this project a well-rounded view of London’s scene in one sense, but I found that it was also limiting. Future studies might benefit from focusing on one institution in greater depth.

Finally, I examined the structural role of indie institutions within indie-music scenes. However, institutions are also spaces of fun scene activities and friendships that could not exist without them. People hang out and play in these spaces. They are sites of extraordinary creativity, just as they are sites of hierarchical jockeying. Although access is not easy or equal for all people, through institutions individuals are able to enter scenes and form friendships with people who might share the same values and interests as them. Institutions enable the musical dreams and desires of many people, even as they celebrate some individuals more than they celebrate others. The discussion of institutions in this thesis is only a glimpse into the world of the social and musical experiences that make an indie-music scene. I encourage my readers to take every opportunity to go out and experience indie-music scenes for themselves.
REFERENCES


---. 94.9 CHRW Mission, Principles & Vision Statements. 


---. Local Album of the Year Rules and Regulations. 
http://chrwradio.ca/content/top-10-voting-fan-favourite-album-year-update (accessed March 2013)


APPENDICIES

Appendix A: List of Interviewees


APK Live’s Manager (name left anonymous). (Manager2). Interview with author. Email Interview. March 18, 2013.


Appendix B: Information Letter

The Independent Music Scene in London, Ontario, or: Scenes, Institutions and a City
Sam Allen, Masters Student in Popular Music and Culture
Dr. Keir Keightley (M.A., Ph.D.)
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, UWO

Information Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research. You may keep a copy of this letter if you wish.

Purpose of this Study

You are being invited to participate in a research study looking at the London, Ontario indie music scene conducted by a researcher at the University of Western Ontario. It is the intention of this study to investigate the relationships among indie music scenes and institutions through a case study of London, Ontario. Some examples of institutions include music venues, record stores and campus radio.

Who is eligible to Participate?

You are eligible if you are 18 years of age or older and a member of the London, Ontario indie music scene.

Research Procedures for this Study

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an ‘unstructured’ interview, in which topics and themes will be suggested by the interviewer. This interview will be completed at a time and location of your convenience. In addition to being interviewed, your music-related actions may also be observed within the London, Ontario indie music scene.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews will take as long as conversations continue, but are not intended to last more than one hour.

Inquiries and Risks

You are free to ask questions about the study at any time by contacting Researcher – Masters Student Sam Allen (email removed) or Supervisor Dr. Keir Keightley (email removed). There are no known risks involved from participating in this study. You do not waive any legal rights by signing the Consent Form.
Benefits from the Study

There are no known personal benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your participation will help to provide insight on indie music scenes and their institutions.

Materials of the Study

This study will consist of interviews with scene members and observations of their music-related activities, along with existing research on the topic. Interviews and music-related actions may be audio and video recorded.

Confidentiality of Information

Information that is collected during the study will be stored securely at the home of the Researcher – Masters Student (Sam Allen). The data will be only read or viewed by the Thesis Advisory Committee of Sam Allen: The Thesis Supervisor – Dr. Keir Keightley and the Second Reader – Dr. Matt Stahl. Results of the study will be available once the thesis is completed. While your name or role in the indie-music scene may be valuable to the study as a whole, you will remain anonymous within this study unless you state otherwise on the Consent Form (please see that form for more information) if you so choose. However, you must be advised that as the London, Ontario scene is small, it is possible that someone may be able to identify you through your answers or actions even if there is no identifying information provided.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Consent to Participate

You consent to participating in the present study by completing the Consent Form.

Contact

( Included in original form - removed from this document)
Appendix C: Consent Form

The Independent Music Scene in London, Ontario, or:
Scenes, Institutions and a City
Sam Allen, Masters Student in Popular Music and Culture
Dr. Keir Keightley (M.A., Ph.D.)
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, UWO

Consent Form

I have read the Information Letter, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. The information I provide during the interview(s) with the Researcher – Masters Student may be used within this project.

I wish to remain anonymous in this study _____ (initial)

I wish to be identified by my name / role within this study (circle those that apply) _____ (initial)

I wish to be notified if this project or any part of it is published. _____ (initial)

____________________________________  ________________________
Participant’s Name (please print)  Participant’s Email

____________________________________  ________________
Participant’s signature  Date

____________________________________
Name of person obtaining informed consent

____________________________________  ________________
Signature of person obtaining informed consent  Date
Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions

For APK Live

Tell me about APK Live.
How do you feel about APK Live?
How do you feel when you’re there?
What is the role of APK Live in the indie-music scene?
What is your relationship to the venue?
What is it like going to a show at APK Live?
What is it like playing a show at the venue?
How is a show booked?
What is your relationship to others at APK Live?

For Grooves

Tell me about Grooves.
How do you feel about Grooves?
Why do you shop at Grooves?
What is the role of Grooves in the indie-music scene?
What do you shop for at Grooves?
Who do you run into at Grooves?
What is your relationship with the staff at the store?

For CHRW

Tell me about CHRW.
What are some of the things that come to mind when you think about CHRW?
What is the role of CHRW in the indie-music scene?
What programs do you like on CHRW?
What events does CHRW support?
What is your experience on air at CHRW?
What is your relationship to others at CHRW?
How do you feel about CHRW?
Appendix E: Ethics Approval

Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

All non-medical research involving human subjects at the University of Western Ontario is carried out in compliance with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Guidelines (2010). The Faculty of Information Media Studies (FIMS) Research Committee has the mandate to review minimal-risk FIMS research proposals for adherence to these guidelines.

2012 – 2013 FIMS Research Committee Membership

1. R. Babe
2. A. Benoit (alt)
3. J. Burkell (alt)
4. E. Comor
5. A. Hearn (alt)
6. P. McKenzie (Chair)
7. H. Hill*
8. A. Quan-Haase
9. D. Robinson
10. C. Whippney*
11. L. Xiao

Research Committee member(s) marked with * have examined the research project FIMS-2012-13-002 entitled:

The Independent Music Scene in London, Ontario, or: Scenes, Institutions and a City

as submitted by: Keir Keightley (Principal Investigator)
Sam Allen

and consider it to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects under the conditions of the University’s Policy on Research Involving Human Subjects. Approval is given for the period to 30 April 2013.

Approval Date: 3 October 2012

Signature of Pamela McKenzie,
Assistant Dean (Research) FIMS
Research Committee Chair (Included in original form - removed from this document)
Appendix F: End of Study Report

END OF STUDY SUMMARY REPORT
Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMMRB)
Form 3F-009 Revised Updated: November 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER</th>
<th>FIMS 2012-13-002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</td>
<td>Dr. Keir Keightley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT TITLE</td>
<td>Treasuries of Subcultural Capital: Three indie institutions in the London, Ontario independent-music scene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I confirm that this study is now complete and request that the Research Ethics Board file on this study be closed.

Signature of Principal Investigator Keir Keightley (Included in original form – removed from this document)

Date: 20/1/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>How many participants/charts...</th>
<th>FOR ENTIRE STUDY PERIOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>were enrolled? (i.e. total enrolment including dropouts)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>completed the study?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>dropped out or were withdrawn from the study?</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2 | Has all data been collected? | YES X |
|   | (N.B. study may not be closed until this is complete) | NO |
| a | Has all contact with study participants for purposes of the research concluded? | YES X |
| b | (N.B. study may not be closed until this is complete) | NO |
| c | Have all study-related data analyses been completed? | YES X |
|   | (Study may be closed even though analyses are on-going) | NO |

Please return the form to:
Office of Research Ethics
Support Services Building Room 5150
CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Samuel Charles Allen

Post-secondary Education and Degrees:

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2011-2013 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2006-2011 B.A.

Fanshawe College
London, Ontario, Canada
2006-2010 Diploma

Honours and Awards:

Gold Medalist – Awarded to highest graduating average

2010

Related Work Experience

Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2011-2013