Notating Indie Culture: Aesthetics of Authenticity

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

ABSTRACT

Authenticity is a notion which carries considerable sociological weight in that it is used to determine cultural boundaries on one hand, and behavioural conduct in the individual on the other. Its idealization influences the formation of music cultures such as *indie* and *punk*, identifiable in the discourse of performers, cultural gatekeepers and music fans. This thesis follows the ways in which these actors pursue notions of authenticity by noting discursive constructions of culturally specific values, and the effects that this pursuit has upon music culture. Using social constructionist theory, I engage in discourse analysis of referents produced by three sets of actors: 1) musicians; 2) those who idealize notions of authenticity in various media, or gatekeepers; and 3) music fans. Arguably, through processes of claims-making, these actors discursively challenge or establish values relative to specific cultures and music, effectively defining social and aesthetic boundaries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people whose support I consider vital to the realization of this project; to them a debt of gratitude is owed.

I wish to thank Dr Sonia Bookman who, through her professionalism, challenged me to strive for a richer quality of research, and to persist despite my not-so-flattering moments. You laid down a solid beat, without which this paper would probably still be a sort of academic free-form improvisation. I wish to thank Dr Gregg Olsen whose candid conversations and suggestions led to a methodological harmony that enlivened this process. You were the blue note. I wish to thank Dr Richard Burleson whose espresso-fuelled conversations provided the base with which to make cultural sense of this noise called music. You were the pitch. I wish to thank the entire faculty and staff in the Department of Sociology. You were the sounding board.

I wish to thank my colleagues and those I now consider to be friends at the University of Manitoba, particularly Paul Catteeuw, Rachell Dolynchuk, Jackson Phiri, Bong-Hwan Kim, and Konstantin Petoukhov, all of whom encouraged me to persist simply by their omnipresence in the department. You were the sustain.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank my wife Amy for seemingly endless conversations, challenges and encouragements. You are my timbre.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Ironically, despite the popularity of the blues in Chicago's Black Belt since the 1920s, civic boosters only began incorporating the city's cultural heritage as the so-called "Home of the Blues" or "Blues Capital of the World" into its overall image in the late 1960s after *white* audiences began patronizing blues bars in this North Side neighbourhood, after which it became economically and politically viable for local elites to appropriate for their own ends… Of course, today the city whole-heartedly embraces its blues legacy and its popularity around the globe; after all, cities often rely on their ability to connote a successful image of authenticity, staged or otherwise, in order to increase their status in the global tourism economy and benefit from the increased revenue and cultural capital that this prestige provides."

- David Grazian, *Blue Chicago* (2003)

"Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own."

- Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991)

Concepts of 'authenticity' permeate all aspects of society, including music. Its pursuit has pervaded the coordination of sounds called music, the formation of collectivities called bands, and the categorization of music into genres. Similarly, the consumption of music is often determined by desires for authenticity, leading to discrimination between music styles and their performers. According to sociologist David Grazian, "…authenticity itself is never an objective quality inherent in things, but simply a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world. These beliefs are subsequently reinforced by the conscious efforts of cultural producers and consumers alike" (2004, 12). The organizing effect of the pursuit of authenticity is what concerns this study, particularly as it relates to music.

The conscious efforts of cultural producers and consumers to attain authenticity leads to the formation of music cultures characterized by meaningful signifiers, such as fashion, musical style and political convictions. In his study of Chicago *blues* clubs,

David Grazian found that a performer's authenticity was signified by African-American ethnicity implying an historical background that was consistent with the experience of slavery and the struggle for civil rights (2004). What was considered to be authentic *blues* music typically followed a common song structure, which was perceived as representative of this culture. However, Grazian found that demand for this ideal enabled the organization of Chicago's *blues* tourist industry. The pursuit of authenticity in music entails an economic structure from which music culture is supported, working to uphold and regenerate a set of beliefs about the world. As alluded to in the quotations that preface this introduction, the pursuit of authenticity in music has led to the global-market orientation of entire cities on one hand, and the perception that authenticity is an essential, objective value to the individual on the other. This thesis explores the construction of notions of authenticity in music by considering the interaction between music performers, their audiences, and the journalists and historians that publish the authentic ideal. Together, these actors' conscious pursuit of authenticity works to form music cultures such as *blues*, *punk* and *indie*, and the notion that music is representative of those cultures. The pursuit of authenticity functions as a powerful societal force.

In this thesis, I will be analyzing how authenticity is constructed in the realm of music, using *punk* and *indie* as comparative case studies. I will focus on two bands representative of these genres, *The Clash* and *Arcade Fire* respectively, in order to explore the ways in which they make claims to authenticity through performance and how they are subjected to processes of authentication[1] by fans and cultural gatekeepers,

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[1] Authentication is conceived as a process whereby bands *become* 'authentic' to their fans and gatekeepers (Peterson 2005, 1090-1092). Social constructionist theory reveals that

such as journalists, critics and the music industry. These bands are chosen for revealing the ways in which they adapt to criteria set by fans and gatekeepers as this indicates an idealization or conscious pursuit of authenticity. This suggests that authenticity is not an objective reality, but is subjective in its construction. Thus, this study explores sites where authenticity is conveyed, including the actors and objects involved in its construction.

What is authenticity in music and how can my perception of it be different from, or similar to that of others? How is this territory between perceptions negotiated and does this negotiation result in a cultural consensus on authenticity in music? The answers to these questions have sociological implications that relate to the construction and maintenance of identity, both of individuals and groups; implications that are alluded to, but not discussed in this study.[2] In terms of authenticity in music, these questions begin to suggest a process of differentiation, and a categorizing force that consolidates bands and their fans into set divisions often called genres. The result of this sort of pursuit of authenticity is the creation of oppositional sub-cultures. Therefore, exploring the construction of authenticity between the active participants in this process reveals the ways in which cultures and sub-cultures are generated and maintained. In the case of music culture, facets of authenticity relating to musical objects, such as recordings and

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this process involves the interaction of producers and consumers, as opposed to the notion that authenticity is created by musicians in isolation, or autonomously by listeners. As it implies culturally specific meaningfulness, authentication becomes a goal to performers; however, it is inextricably dependent upon their fans' endorsement. Cultural gatekeepers use various media to support this process by praising cultural values that relate to authenticity. This is discussed further in chapter three.
[2] Issues of identity construction are not dealt with here beyond the appropriation of values related to authenticity.

instruments, and subjective experiences are concentrated and identifiable: authenticity in music culture is represented in bands' performances, celebrated or critiqued by gatekeepers, and legitimated by fans. This is called *The Circuit of Authentication* (Peterson 2005) (see figure 1.1). The questions then emerge: how is authenticity constructed in a particular arena of music culture by fans and gatekeepers, and, how does a band such as The Clash or Arcade Fire make claims to authenticity through the processes within the circuit of authentication? How does this constitute a discourse of authenticity – what is considered 'real' *punk* or 'real' *indie* music?

The Circuit of Authentication

PERFORMER
the musician's claim to
authenticity as performed

GATEKEEPER
the legitimation of authenticity
by the culture industry:
managers, producers, journalists,
historians, and critics

RECEIVER
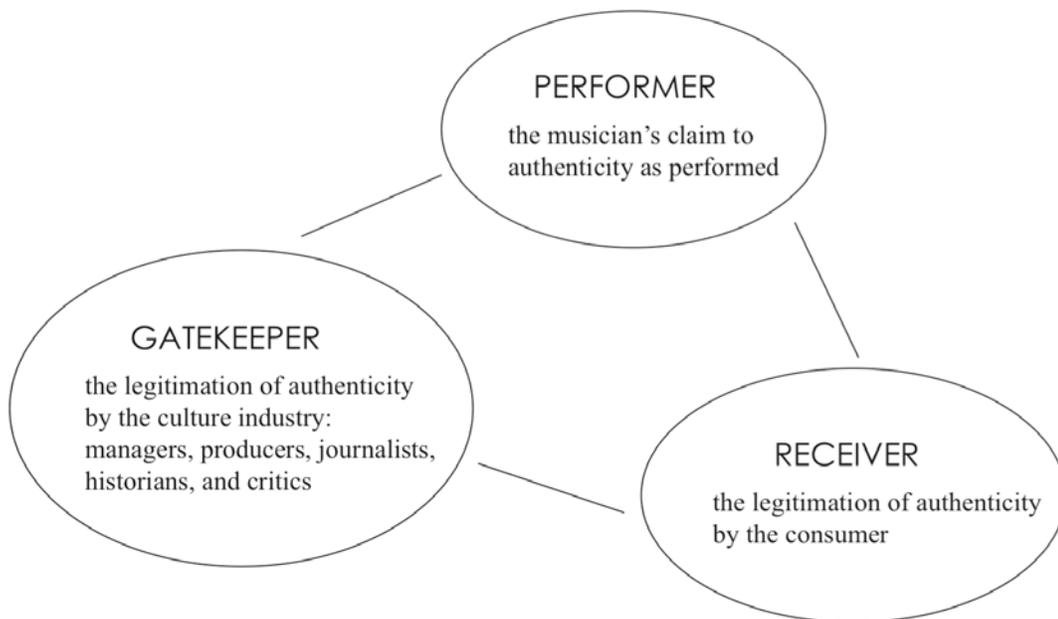the legitimation of authenticity
by the consumer

Figure 1.1

Sociological and cultural research has focused on the construction of authenticity in *blues* (Grazian 2004), *country* (Peterson 1997), *punk* (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990), *rap* (Harkness 2010), *rock* (Tetzlaff 1994; Keightley 2001) and *grunge* (Mazullo 2000). Academic understandings of authenticity vary from objectivist to social

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constructionist, while methodological approaches vary from ethnography (Grazian 2004; DeNora 2003) to discourse analysis (Tetzlaff 1994; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990). This qualitative research project adds *punk* and *indie* to existing genre specific studies, and is of the first to analyze *indie*, and to compare it with *punk*. It uses discourse analysis to reveal how the interplay of representations unique to *indie* and *punk* works to construct the authenticity of the genre and specific bands. Research on the social dynamics of *indie* culture has only recently emerged and tends to focus only on institutional politics and aesthetics (Hesmondhalgh 1999; Hibbett 2005; Newman 2009). While this includes a consideration of economic structuring, such as the effect of the music industry on music's creation and performance, it tends to overlook the influence of fans and gatekeepers. This study expands on such research, highlighting the significance of a 'commercial-free' sensibility in the construction of *indie*, in addition to exposing the contemporary interplay of musicians, gatekeepers and fans, the combination of which works to authenticate *indie*. Comparing *indie* with *punk* will provide a better understanding of the processes by which discourses of authenticity are constructed in music, examining the differences as well as similarities in the idealization of 'real' *punk* and 'real' *indie*.

The main objective of this research is to investigate the ways in which authenticity is constructed in music culture. Imperative to this study is an understanding of the historical emergence of authenticity as a significant western cultural evaluative gauge of ideals of 'truth,' 'genuineness' and 'reality.'[3] Chapter 2 discusses these and

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[3] The discipline of Ethics deals with what is good and bad, and with moral duty and obligation. Alternatively, *ethic* is defined as a guiding philosophy (Merriam-Webster 1999). This paper analyzes authenticity as a set of principles ('truth,' 'genuineness,' 'reality,' etc) that has the effect of creating cultural identity - of individuals and groups -

other terms relating to authenticity, such as originality, innovation and uniqueness, and notions of authentication. This is useful in revealing contextual contingencies which allow performers to claim authenticity and fans to authenticate those claims. This is followed by a consideration of theoretical approaches, including s*ymbolic interactionism*, Adorno's c*ritical theory*, Baudrillard's *postmodern theory*, and the *constructionist* approach. Here, a discussion of studies already done on the construction of authenticity in *blues* and *grunge* preface the framework I employ in analyzing *punk* and *indie*. Peterson's social constructionist framework will be explored for systematically breaking down concepts of authenticity into parts, which correspond with sites where "authenticity work" occurs (2005, 1086-1090; 1995, 223-225).[4]

In chapter 3, the research design and method will be discussed. Here, I introduce the method of discourse analysis, which will be used to explore the dynamics of authenticity work in order to reveal the interplay of actors and objects indentified therein. Published, secondary data is discussed, including biographies, interviews, articles, online video sites and fan forums. Discourse analysis is useful in answering questions regarding definitions of authentic cultural or ethnic boundaries; the ways in which expert accounts of music performance, interviews with musicians, and fan comments construct notions of authentic culture. It allows for an analysis of language in order to reveal the perception of values, and the ways in which they operate to construct systems of meaning, through

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by defining social boundaries. Thus, the pursuit of authenticity has an aesthetic component and an ethical effect.
[4] Authenticity work describes the collective effort employed to construct authenticity, including authentication (Peterson 2005, 1086). Peterson's theory breaks this work down into a number of forms, which operate in this project as sites of analysis to be discussed in chapter two.

which cultural membership is maintained. Sites where authenticity work occurs are discussed to reveal their composition, including the interplay of actors, which make up the circuit of authentication. Finally, The Clash and Arcade Fire are introduced as a case studies to reveal the ways in which concepts of authenticity effect constructions of *punk* and *indie* music cultures.

In chapter 4, I discuss the analysis of data related to The Clash and *punk* culture, in which I focus on sites where the band makes claims to membership, attains status based authenticity and creates an authentic experience. In each case, I discuss the interaction between the band, in attracting authentication, cultural gatekeepers, in legitimatizing The Clash's claims-making processes, and fans, in authenticating claims to be the 'real deal'. The constantly changing social, economic and political dynamics around The Clash, such as international fan growth and commercial success, effectively challenge their claim to *punk* membership and demands authenticity work. Thus, sites of authenticity work reveal responses to these challenges, and or, the idealization of authenticity. Peterson's authenticity framework is used to conceptualize sites where aspects of authenticity are constructed, and the actors involved in its representation. The actors include relevant and influential musicians, managers, journalists, biographers and fans that highlight and therefore legitimatize ideals of authenticity. In the case of *punk*, authenticity revolves around themes of anti-commercialism, anarchy or anti-establishment, and do-it-yourself (DIY) pro-creativity or bricolage.

Following the same scheme of discussion as chapter 4, chapter 5 analyzes data related to Arcade Fire using Peterson's authenticity framework to identify relevant actors, processes of authentication, and resultant socio-cultural implications. Contemporary

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issues are noted, such as the advancement of computer-based technologies, which differentiate Arcade Fire from The Clash. It will be demonstrated that Arcade Fire represents 'authentic' *indie* values such as anti-commercialism, DIY or autonomous attitude, and communal experience based on self-realization.

Finally, in the conclusion, I compare the two bands for the ways in which they construct authenticity, noting differences relating to historical context, time and space, as well as the makeup of the bands, fans and gatekeepers. The Clash's career trajectory, including sites where the band works to claim membership and gain status provides a point against which Arcade Fire's authenticity work is compared.

Although its definition has been contested in subjective and objective work, authenticity is a relevant aspect of cultural formations in Western culture. A variety of inter-disciplinary research reveals the pursuit of authenticity as a pursuit of cultural ideals: 'truth,' 'genuineness' and 'reality.' However, an exploration of the construction of 'authenticity' has less to do with discovering 'truth,' than it has in revealing a socially constructed concept. In this project, *punk* and *indie* culture are analyzed for negotiating concepts of authenticity within which The Clash and Arcade Fire are exemplary.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW and THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Beginning with a discussion of the historical emergence of authenticity as a meaningful

cultural value, this chapter considers social processes associated with industrialization

and mobility as forces that emphasize the values of 'originality,' 'uniqueness,' and

'innovation,' in addition to 'truth,' 'genuineness,' and 'reality.' The processes examined

include individualization and the aestheticization of everyday life, in which cultural

values that are represented in high art become objectified and desirable in society. In this

chapter, I also outline theoretical considerations to gain insight into the ways in which

authenticity is conceptualized, and to establish the theoretical framework for this thesis. I

focus on four distinct approaches in the literature: personal or subjective authenticity,

which is grounded in symbolic interactionism, Adorno's critical theory, which conceives

of authenticity objectively, the postmodernist approach, as well as social constructionism,

which conceives of authenticity as socially constructed within in a specific social context.

Taking a social constructionist perspective, I will discuss Peterson's model, which sub-

divides authenticity into construction sites (1997; 2005). His theory will act as a sounding

board to explore how authenticity is constructed in music culture. I will also discuss the

process of authentication in which objects and cultures become meaningful through the

productive and consumptive practices of interacting actors. Finally, relevant literature on

the construction of authenticity in music culture will be reviewed, including studies

already done on *blues* and *grunge*, noting the definition of genre boundaries, the ways in

which bands make claims to membership and attract authentication from fans, the work

of journalists, critics, biographers and other cultural gatekeepers in historicizing bands and legitimizing their claims, and the definition of consumptive cultures which correspond with *blues* and *grunge* cultures.

2.1 The Historical Significance of Authenticity to Creator and Consumer

'Authenticity' emerged as an important notion in the 17th century and the rise of modernity (Trilling 1972). It coincided with changes in trade relations and the establishment of the modern state where the institutions of the family and religion were displaced by individualism (Inglis 2005; Clifford 1988; Bauman 2001; Beck 2002). The political, social and economic implications of these upheavals are well documented and debated by classical sociologists such as Max Weber (1930), Karl Marx (1848) and Emile Durkheim (1912). Social mobility and urbanization forced individuals to live and labour among strangers, which arguably resulted in feelings of alienation, anomie and meaninglessness while increasing the potential for guile and deceit. Although this alienation perspective is contested (Yuill 2011; Baudrillard 1994), this project uses these ideas: alienation denotes a lack of purpose attributed to dissociation from traditional sources of community; forces that precipitate a desire for authenticity.

According Lindholm, modern authenticity came to inform a social framework predicated on the universal moral self, and was translated to the expressive arts (2008). According to Lionel Trilling, the pursuit of authenticity connotes an ethical aspect in that values such as 'truth' and 'genuineness' are given preference in everyday life (1972). For instance, the rise of modernity is characterized by increased social mobility and urbanization that stressed sincerity as a virtue in business and exchange, and emphasized the individual's responsibility to self and action. To guard against deceitful sincerity,

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individuals idealized consistency between belief and action, which was understood as authenticity. In turn, authenticity was seen to enrich the everyday life of individuals while providing a common ethic, and led to notions of an ideal self (Taylor 1991). Contemporaneous with social and political changes in modernity, was the development of modes of expression through which authenticity as a collective and individual ideal would be signified.

By the 19th century, authenticity became an important indication of cultural or ethnic identity (Trilling 1972). According to David Inglis, social mobility, trade and urbanization were characterized by risk and uncertainty, to which states responded with institutionalization, including increased trade and tariff laws, and law enforcement (2005, 65-74). Consequently, as states attempted to secure boundaries, values related to cultural identity were also institutionalized, and exemplified in art and music. According to Howard Becker, art that is consumed by the ruling authorities, or in this case the aristocracy, typically correspond with their value system (1982). Owing to their collective influence, aristocratic ideals were legitimized by their commission and consumption by the upper classes, and imposed upon the rest of the nation as culturally representative. This is referred to as 'high art.' Thus, high art became valuable to the ruling class for its function in signifying their ideals (Lindholm 2008). In contrast, the ruling class commissioned art that was representative of peasant and working class culture for purposes of education or amusement, not endorsement. If represented in high art, low culture was negatively stereotyped and discredited (Gans 1999). In turn, artists gained notoriety by their ability to represent high-culture ideals in their artwork, and in

their skill to evoke an emotional experience. As a result, artists' incentive to innovate was encouraged through competition for commissions offered by aristocracy.

A byproduct of artist innovation was originality. On one hand, originality increased the value of the artist's product to its primarily aristocratic consumer, as its production was limited (Bourdieu 1984; Benjamin 1968). In the 19th century, high art was typically commissioned and acquired by the ruling classes, which benefitted from its conspicuous consumption as it conveyed prowess among the cultural elite (Veblen 1899). Upper class boundaries became distinguished not only by industrial ownership or political alliances, but also by the acquisition of skills by which art was selected, symbolizing taste and status[5] (Bourdieu 1984). On the other hand, the association of originality with the artist created distinction among peers, and increased the value of the idea of authenticity to self.[6] The artist's mastery over emotive conveyance became revered and consumed by the wealthy and influential, whose endorsement legitimized high art. Subsequently, demand for originality preceded the production and reproduction of high art, and plagiarism became as abhorred as uniqueness was cherished (Potter 2010, 141-4). The originality of the artist and his or her work suggests authenticity, while the copy lacks originality, and therefore loses meaning. Plagiarism operates as a negative endorsement of authenticity when seen as a threat to originality.

Values attributed to originality and authenticity were reinforced with the rise of individualism and the aestheticization of everyday life (Berman [1970] 2009;

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[5] According to Bourdieu, interpretive knowledge of culture, or taste, is called cultural capital (1984). Similar to economic capital, individuals and groups use cultural capital as a resource upon which they draw in the pursuit of power.
[6] I discuss the concept of 'authenticity to self' more below, in the section on individualization.

Featherstone 2007). With respect to individualization, processes of secularization and rationalization gradually dissolved notions of communal membership traditionally informed by religion, family and the state. This is not to say that group membership was eradicated as a form of belonging, rather, non-traditional institutions and everyday activities became a source of identity to the individual, such as career or pastime. Throughout this process, the individual, as opposed to the group member, was faced with the responsibility of identifying meaning and constructing their self-identity (Bauman 2001). The precariousness of this project was to suggest that individuals could be either authentic or inauthentic, socially adequate or in-adequate.

Individualized systems of meaning correspond with the high-class system discussed above yet extend to the whole of society by means of mass production (Featherstone 2007, 64-80). Values that are expressed in art and music are socially learned (Frith 1996), revealing a system of symbols from which individuals gain meaning in order to construct their self-identity (Peterson 2005, 1089-90). Thus, the process of individualization extends the high-class pursuit of cultural values and originality to the whole of society, irrespective of class. However, a contradiction emerges with the responsibility of self-construction: as values are objectified, commodified, mass-produced and consumed, a loss of meaning is perceived (Frith 2007). Commercialization, like plagiarism, increases accessibility and diminishes the value associated with an object's originality. Walter Benjamin says,

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases

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to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object. (1968, 221)

Further, the unique subjective experience, or aura, evoked by an object is also attenuated by mechanical reproduction (Benjamin 1968, 221). The idea that objectified authenticity offers a greater sense of self-hood drives the pursuit of authenticity throughout society.

Consequently, notions of authenticity informed by originality, uniqueness and a lack of commercialism are strengthened. Authenticity comes to be signified by pre-modern or non-commercial culture, and non-commodified subjective experience. The effect of this contradiction creates the impression that the authentic is true and desirable for its meaningfulness, yet elusive to all but the discerning individual. In pursuing authenticity, the self-constructed individual is sensitized to, and made the final judge of its aesthetic value.

Bound up with the emphasis on individual self-construction and expression is the aestheticization of everyday life. Mike Featherstone notes three important historical movements in the shift towards the aestheticization of the everyday, contemporaneous with both individualization, and challenges to the high-low distinction in art (2007, 64-80). First, sub-cultural or critical art challenged the idea that high art was restricted to a canon, created by and for the cultural elite. In music, the hierarchy of high art was challenged by critical composers who used innovative skill to gain acclaim rather than their ability to embody high culture values (Adorno 1991, 59-60). Also, the growth of the masses increased demand for folk or popular music and the expression of non-elite ideals. That these art forms emerged from a sub-culture suggested that anything could be considered art, including the objects of everyday life, of any class, and of any*body*

(Wacquant 1995). Second, life therefore could be turned into a work of art, comprised of a dual focus on aesthetic consumption and the need to make life an aesthetically pleasing whole; distinct and nonconformist (Featherstone 2007, 64-80). Third, an increase in demand for signs and symbols, and the commercial manipulation of images and desires served to exaggerate the importance of culture to everyday life (Featherstone 2007, 64-80).

In the self-conscious creation of lifestyles, a hierarchy of values emerges, in which commercial free experiences are considered rare and more valuable than those that are mass-produced (Peterson 2005, 1088-89). Processes of stylization which emphasize the consumption of things for their cultural meanings and values, combines with a demand for commercial-free consumer experience (Featherstone 2007, 64-80). Authenticity becomes important in this context as it conveys ideals of 'personal' meaning, such as 'genuineness,' 'originality' and 'uniqueness' to self, yet projected socially, by means of an assemblage of cultural goods experiences that convey a distinctive lifestyle (Peterson 2005, 1089-90; Potter 2010, 72-75, 133-34). The aestheticization of everyday life thus becomes a key feature of contemporary consumer culture, wherein objects such as music are produced and consumed for their meanings and expressive capacity. Thus, objects and experiences are consumed, and the lifestyles that emerge from this consumption start to convey meaning and reflect individuality.

The significance of authenticity to contemporary Western culture follows a trajectory that is rooted in modernity, including processes of individualization and the aestheticization of everyday life. Here, urbanization and social mobility propped the individual with 'virtues' such as sincerity and authenticity, while condemning 'vices'

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such as duplicity or inconsistency between character and action. Traits such as originality

and uniqueness became 'objectively' valuable in the expressive arts and their creators

became distinguished among the cultural elite. As high art and culture was challenged by

critical artists, mechanical reproduction and the growth of the masses, meaningfulness

came to be associated with the everyday life of the consumer. Thus, the individual's

subjective experience operates as a site where authenticity is assessed and legitimized.

2.2 Theoretical Considerations

I have identified four key sociological approaches to understanding authenticity that

differ in various ways. Authenticity is typically conceived as either objectively verifiable

or socially constructed. In the former, authenticity is considered a defining quality of the

object that is called authentic. It is taken as an indication of truth and wholeness, and is

objectified in the production and consumption of goods and personal/subjective

experience. The latter considers concepts of authenticity to be constructed and signified

through an assemblage of social indicators, in a specific socio-historical context. In this

sense, the authenticity of a person or object is signified through association with other

indicators. This section outlines four perspectives on authenticity, including the symbolic

interactionist personal authenticity approach, Adorno's critical perspective, Baudrillard's

postmodernist theory and social constructionist theory.

2.2.1 Personal Authenticity: Symbolic Interactionist Theory

In symbolic interactionist research (Goffman 1959; Turner 1976; Erikson 1995;

Hochschild 1983) authenticity is conceptualized as a meaningful aspect of self and group

identity, constructed through face-to-face interactions, first-hand experience, and the

consumption of objects that are perceived as meaningful. From this perspective,

individuals interpret their experiences as though uniquely part of who they lay claim to be. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman explores how the individual attempts to construct a convincing presentation of self, as sincere, through performance (1959). Primarily, the individual acts out of a perceived reality, *believed* to be real, suggesting that behavior is subsequently sincere or honest. Alternatively, the cynical actor rejects the idea of reality as anything but constructed, in turn manipulating their behaviour objectively, to achieve goals. Indeed, it is only under the scrutiny of an audience that performance is deemed (in) authentic.

For the purpose of this paper, the symbolic interactionist conception of authenticity relates to notions of truth and is variously called authenticity to self, personal, subjective, experiential or existential authenticity. It stems from the historical process whereby originality becomes a valuable aspect of the individual, as discussed above. Originality boosts the individual's status and distinguishes them relative to their peers. In this sense, atypical, lived experience is more meaningful than institutionally based identity. For example, the symbolic interactionist, Ralph Turner, explores the self-concepts of interviewees in order to discover where people anchor their identities (1976). He situates these accounts on a scale ranging from institution-to impulse-based. In the former, institution-based anchorages are associated with career and economic goals. In the latter, self-identity is based on experience, particularly relating to the individual's volition, and is marked by internal feelings or emotions. Turner theorizes a cultural shift towards valuing non-traditional experience as an indication of originality and uniqueness. Non-traditional experience is used to construct self-identity as it is considered unique when compared with the redundancy of traditional anchorages.

Implicit in Turner's theory is the concept of a mainstream or mass culture as the source of institutional-based self-anchorage. When viewed as normative, mainstream culture becomes predictable and meaningless, while impulse-based decision-making becomes valuable for its originality, apparently from outside of the mainstream. Turner's theory is significant for revealing a trend among authenticity seekers, for valuing volitional experience over the mundane. However, he does not consider the causes of the perception of mainstream culture as mundane, including institutional or structurally-based forces of commodification and mass production through which the meaning of popular culture products, such as film, literature or music is eroded.

Arlie Hochschild theorizes that the increasing importance of personal authenticity stems from the commercialization of feelings and emotions (1983, 185-198). She suggests that people are forced to consider the intersection of selfhood and feelings when corporations impose emotion management. For instance, Hochschild found that flight attendants are required to present a pleasant disposition to passengers irrespective of how they are treated. In turn, this garners a different sort of false reaction from passengers, perhaps taking advantage of their disposition. Hochschild's research takes into account institutionally imposed regulations on subjective experience, and suggests that individuals turn to their own volition in order to add variety to experience from which they can claim meaningfulness associated with originality. This perspective is helpful in considering how commercialism affects ideas of self, however it is limited to social-psychological questions of individual identity formation. Hochschild and Turner assume that self-determined experience offers subjects a stronger sense of self than those

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experiences which are imposed upon the individual by institutional and commercial sources.

2.2.2 Critical Theory

Theodor Adorno critiques subjective notions of authenticity, and instead posits an idea of the authentic as grounded in objective conditions (2003). In the *Jargon of Authenticity* (2003), he criticizes 19th and 20th century existentialist philosophers such as Husserl and Kierkegaard, not only for celebrating subjective authenticity as an indication of true self, but also for neglecting to reveal how opportunistic political-economic forces influence those indications. In an effort to combat the abstract nature of idealism - the belief that reality in some ultimate sense is related to the contents of our minds - the philosophers connect the realism of experience with self-identity (Wilson 2007, 72-74). Adorno, however, is wary of emphasizing one dimension of identity for what it negates politically. He argues that they miss the connection between perceived reality and forces imposed upon that reality, therefore structuring that reality.

Adorno argues that escape from the structuring forces imposed by the political economy upon the individual is not through existentialism; rather they are sustained in the midst of it (2003). He says that existentialism creates an alternative abstractness where the individual is isolated and increasingly susceptible to exploitation: "The tone of the jargon has something in it of the seriousness of the augurs, arbitrarily independent from their context or conceptual content, conspiring with whatever is sacred" (2003, 4). Adorno argues that personal authenticity is comparable to mysticism in that it proffers autonomy as a redemptive state, albeit by framing mainstream culture, to which the individual inextricably belongs, as though mundane, or valueless.

Subjective authenticity frames the individual as though enslaved to their experience yet negates additional influences, such as capitalist related competition and exchange. Adorno fears that in distracting the individual from oppressive forces of capitalism, existential authenticity functions more like a narcotic than true redemption (2003). This is achieved through an illusory autonomy while disguising a discriminatory dichotomy: personal authenticity indicates 'true' self, valuable to the 'enlightened' few, while a lack of personal authenticity denotes meaninglessness, and cultural ineptitude. Adorno continues:

> The stereotypes of the jargon support and reassure subjective movement. They seem to guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he is doing - bleating with the crowd - simply by virtue of his using those stereotypes to guarantee that one has achieved it all himself, as an unmistakably free person. The formal gesture of autonomy replaces the context of autonomy. (2003, 13)

Adorno takes issue with the inward turn that subjective authenticity encourages. It is not that the individual is simply immorally 'selfish,' rather, embracing subjective experience as a source of identity negates the political economic context in which individuals exchange labour for identity signifiers. Individualized 'freedom through experience' becomes a collective zero sum game for all but the economy. Adorno continues,

> That which pseudo-individualizing attends to in the culture industry, the jargon attends to among those who have contempt for the culture industry…It seems to be invented for those who feel that they have been judged by history, or at least that they are falling, but who still strut in front of their peers as if they were an interior elite. (2003, 13-14)

Adorno warns that subjective authenticity distracts the individual from the influence of those who control the exchange of labour, and the production of cultural modes such as music. He suggests that within this system, individuals are indeed greatly influenced, if

not controlled, by their coterminous desire for freedom and belonging. The freedom to express individuality is fulfilled by consumption of 'authentic' goods, while belonging is signified in the consumption of a standardized product (Adorno 1991, 98-106). However, the existentialist view suggests that material consumption is limited to fulfill individual desires for autonomy and belonging. Subjective experience is proffered as the 'truer' source. Adorno warns that this is a false resolution to the contradiction of the consumption of culture: individuals are still bound by their desire to fulfill 'needs,' imposed from outside of the individual.

Adorno's critique is an exploration of the possibilities of social transformation (1991, 2). He was critical of the manipulation of the masses by the political elite, particularly the Nazis in 1930s-40s Germany. His theory developed after the proletariat failed to protest the atrocities of the regime, and suggests that critical consciousness is suppressed by the cold calculating economics of the 'culture industry' (Martin 1995, 82).[7] It presupposes that culture is standardized through the process of mass production creating the illusion that lower class values correspond with upper class values. Thus, before the proletariat realizes that its true culture is threatened by standardization and commodification, it is persuaded that the analogue is in fact, reality (Adorno 1991, 98-106). This machine imbues a false significance in the object strictly for the purpose of increasing market value.

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[7] The culture industry is conceived as the manipulation of western society through an elaborate mass media apparatus where culture is standardized through mass reproduction (Adorno 1991, 98-106; O'Sullivan 1994, 123-24). According to Adorno and his Frankfurt school compatriots, the culture industry plays a manipulative role in advanced capitalist societies to contain or subvert critical consciousness on behalf of the dominant classes.

Adorno's theory provides an important, yet contradictory perspective for both authenticity and music culture. Importantly, he reveals that the idea of personal authenticity is influenced by commercial and political influences. Rather than a safely preserved abstract notion of self, subjective experience is affected by the context in which it is formed, including the influence of social forces that stem from the political economy and the culture industry. His theory suggests that self-identity is a product of these forces. Also, when experience is celebrated as a 'truer' source of self-identity, it dichotomizes the individual in society. Adorno argues that this effect divides and conquers the proletariat rather than uniting them against their true oppressors.

However, Adorno's theory bears a few limitations worth noting. His concept of authentic culture is rooted in the notion of a pre-capitalist reality, a phenomenon that he suggests is all but lost to forces of modernity and the manipulation of the ruling elite. His theory suggests that capitalist society produces a 'false' reality in which the objective circumstances of the working class are omitted, therefore positing a problematic distinction between true/false cultural claims. Adorno does not allow for an understanding of how authenticity is discursively constructed in a specific context, involving multiple actors who are not of equal power. Instead, he conceives of authenticity as a mechanism by which the masses become divided and conquered, and advocates for an evaluation of whether something is objectively true or false, based on its ability to reflect working class reality and invoke critical consciousness. In this scenario, the political economy becomes the sole top-down influence over the culture industry, which in turn is used to manipulate the masses. Furthermore, Adorno's promotion of critical consciousness through the *avant-garde* emphasizes a particular genre of music

(Adorno 1991, 29-60) and may simply indicate a taste-based critique of *pop* and *jazz* (Tetzlaff, 1994). While Adorno's critical understanding of subjective authenticity is limited to the singular idea of a culture industry, it remains useful in that it draws attention towards the way authenticity can be manipulated in the interests of capital.

2.2.3 Postmodernist Theory

From the postmodernist perspective of Jean Baudrillard, authenticity does not exist (1994, 1996). Rather, he suggests that we live in an aesthetic hallucination of reality where the real and simulated are indistinguishable (Pawlett 2007). What is taken as real is simply the product of imitation, regenerated for the purpose of signifying meaning. In *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard analyzes the production and consumption of objects such as antiques, in order to reveal how they come to collectively signify meaningfulness to consumers (1996, 77-85). Pre-existent to the consumer, antiques are taken to signify the idea of origin as a sacred or mystical quality. By associating antiques with origin, they are given meaningfulness, as though foundational to the (post) modern world. The effect of antiques is to endorse the individual consumer, as though the consumer possesses a mystical artifact that connects them with their historical roots. This interpretation influences the consumer's notion of self through history. However, Baudrillard questions the accuracy of representation and thus, the function that antique objects provide to the consumer. He states, "And indeed, it *is* false in so far as *it puts itself forward as authentic within a system whose basic principle is by no means authenticity but, rather, the calculation of relationships and the abstractness of signs* (Baudrillard 1996, 78 [italics in original]). He suggests that society operates based on a system of interpreting relationships and signs, not simply an exchange of labour or the

pursuit of truth. Baudrillard's theory reveals the individual's determination, or ethic in legitimating goods. Though objects may not be authentic, the notion that they are leads to their consumption. Baudrillard's theory also allows for the potential for self-reflexivity that Adorno neglects in his critical theory. In this sense, authenticity is not simply existential, nor is it objectively verified truth, but as it signifies these qualities it reveals an important cultural manifestation: that meaning emboldens as its absence is threatened.

Baudrillard takes images or signs as passing through a series of successive phases where reality loses its referent value (1994, 6). As this value is lost, the consumer idealizes meaning and projects it onto objects, a process that results in nostalgia; mythologized origin embedded with signs of reality. However, this system of signs or representation loses touch with reality through an endless circuit of simulation, closing as simulacra; a system of self-simulation. The image does not simply mask a profound reality or the absence of reality, rather, "…it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum (6, 1994)." Postmodern theory reveals the supplanting of reality by hyperreality. Therefore, it is no longer relevant to assume a verifiable reality. Drawing on aspects of this approach, this study is not concerned with determining the authenticity of objects and subjects per se, but rather analyzes how the ideal of authenticity is constructed and used to generate meaning in the symbolic exchange of objects. This is different from Adorno's theory in that it allows us to recognize how actors use objects without presupposing that their actions are determined solely by class background. It explores how notions of authenticity negotiate 'distinction' or differentiation between objects and the cultures that form around them. Baudrillard's theory considers objects as constituting a currency of symbolism. When these objects are

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claimed as authentic, and when authenticity is considered to be a culturally valuable notion, this results in a careful arrangement of 'authentic' objects. When threatened with fragmentation, or non-meaning, 'authentic' objects are discarded. Thus, when associated with individual consumers, notions of authenticity become a discriminating influence.

2.2.4 Constructionist Theory

Constructionist theory argues that it is problematic to assume that authenticity is objectively verifiable (Hall 1997). If 'true,' an objectified authenticity would simply reduce this project to matter of verification of cultural membership. It would produce an inexhaustible list of 'authentic' things without exploring the social implications of their symbolic exchange. In relinquishing the notion that authenticity is true, we can explore factors that have been taken for granted. This approach investigates the appropriation of object and subject that symbolize authenticity and the process of authentication. Authenticity is not taken as inherent in the 'authentic,' rather meaning is arbitrarily delineated through processes of communication and discursive formation. It is in the socializing process of representation that the authentic experience is idealized and made meaningful, particularly in music. Here, the 'authentic' takes form and meaning through process of signification. Rather than qualify the (in) authentic, this perspective observes the social construction of a symbolic currency where the idea of the 'authentic' lends value to things and behaviour.

It is important to consider the influence of consumer culture in the construction of authenticity. James Clifford, for example, recognizes the circulatory influence of cultural ideals upon consumer culture in what he calls the art-culture system (1988, 215-251). In this system, the production of cultural goods, such as music, radio, literature, the Internet,

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film, and television, are effected by commercial and market principles of supply and

demand, competition and accumulation, and the lifestyle habits of the end user (1988).

The interaction of these forces works to aestheticize, or stylize, objects and their users, by

classifying and assigning them meaning, and establishing contexts in which to consume

them, such as museums, concerts halls, clubs or house parties. Clifford argues that this

arrangement operates as: "a machine for making authenticity" (Lury 1996, 56). Key to

Clifford's theory is the mutually reassuring link between culture, which in principle

represents all learned behaviour, yet in practice, privileges the coherent, balanced and

'authentic,' and art, which idealizes representations of culture. It is the influence of this

idealization upon culture that works to devalue the incoherent, imbalanced and

inauthentic representations of culture (Lury 1996, 55-59). Through technological

development and mass communication, meaningful representations are circulated

globally, extending the richness and 'authenticity' of Euro-American culture to all ways

of life, including music culture.[8]

The constructionist perspective forms the dominant theoretical approach to

authenticity in this study. Authenticity is contextually and socially constructed via

processes of claims-making and authentication. According to Peterson (2005), all active

members in a field of culture production, such as music, including song-writers,

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[8] Following Clifford, Celia Lury discusses challenges to the Euro-American high-low
distinction by both political struggles of the repressed, for instance related to class,
gender, race and age, and the recognition of 'valid' cultural representations called, *folk*
and *primitive* cultures (1996, 55-59). The result has been to move from the evolutionary-
based idea of Culture, in which Euro-Americans are dominant, towards a pluralist notion
of cultures, in which multiple ways of life are celebrated. In this case, however, she
argues that this transformation has not necessarily eliminated the high-low distinction,
rather it has relocated it to idea of a possessive self. Thus, the self is judged according to
accumulation of things and identity traits, including experience, memory and knowledge.

producers, singers, musicians, sound engineers, music industry executives, journalists, critics, historians and biographers pursue an ideal that is authenticity. At each point in the creation of a cultural product, adjustments are made with the end user in mind, whose consumption determines the legitimacy of the product, and influences the regeneration of the cycle once again. In his study, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (1997), Peterson found that with the passage of time, historical accounts of musicians and the production of their music were typically simplified and blended with other accounts, a process in which the identity of musicians and their music are idealized and constructed through narrative (2005). However, he also found that music producers and historians alike inextricably depend on the end consumer to legitimize their claim to authenticity. Time-wise, the fan plays a decisive role in the initial development of a musician's career and as arbiter of notions of authenticity. For the purpose of this paper, I focus on three sets of actors: performers; journalists, critics, biographers and historians, or in other words, cultural gatekeepers; and fans in the *circuit of authentication*. The conceptual use of this circuit avoids the objectivist claim that performers are inherently authentic, and isolated in their production of music. Rather, the circuit allows us to recognize the social conditions in which authenticity is constructed, and the actors that are involved in the production of discourses of authenticity.

2.3 Framework of Analysis

From the constructionist perspective, authenticity becomes a multi-faceted idea, comprised of many sites which are often taken for granted. According to Peterson, it takes work to construct and maintain authenticity, particularly as it relates to music culture (1997; 2005). Peterson's model, which follows the constructionist perspective,

informs the theoretical framework of this study. Using his model of authentication, five sites where authenticity work occurs are identified and systematically analyzed for constructing discourses of authenticity in music culture. First, *authenticity through ethnic/cultural identity* relates to ideas of group consistency and membership (Peterson 2005, 1086-87). Peterson suggests that group membership is the easiest type of authenticity to maintain and represent, particularly when symbolized physiologically, as in meanings already ascribed to skin colour or cultural heritage. This essentialist notion provides the basis for judgment of authentic membership, and is signified through performance (Albrecht 2008). Cultural identity is the summation of meaningful values associated with ethnicity, behaviour, style and fashion (Hebdige 1979). Sub-cultures are underpinned by authenticity in that it suggests tradition or consistency in value system, and operates as a boundary between groups. For instance, ethnicity plays a significant role in determining authenticity in *blues* performance, effectively excluding those who are not African-American and male from membership (Grazian 2003). It is important to note that ethnicity plays a lesser role in determining the cultural identity of genres or sub-cultures such as *punk* and *Indie*. Here, membership is clamed by other means, signified through consistency of ethic, style or fashion.

Second, *authenticity through endorsement* relates to the process of grafting in to an 'authentic' lineage (Peterson 2005, 1087-88). This is indicated when young performers share 'torch passing' performances with established musicians, connecting them with a pre-existing system of meaning. Endorsement through torch passing serves to legitimate the up-and-coming artist's claim to membership and works to attract fan authentication. When a young band claims authenticity through the endorsement of an

established musician, they increase their potential to gain the support of an established

fan base. In addition, young fans join an established system or culture of meaningful

values, which is used to exclude 'in-authentic' fans. Peterson says that endorsement

reveals the 'elasticity of authenticity' (2005). While ethnic or cultural identity suggests

that authenticity is independent of societal change, in fact it is fluid. Authenticity is often

weft with ties to other authenticity signifiers, such as status identity, which fluctuate with

the artist's performances and shifts according to fans' legitimatization.

Third party endorsement comes by way of journalists, biographers and

researchers and is structured according to market systems of trade established by the

recording industry. Peterson considers the process of authentication as initiating with the

production of simple objects invested with meaning (signs), such as recorded songs, and

closing with their critical acceptance and consumption by the end user (2005). In this

case, authentication that results from interaction between actors is systemically

organized. This includes systems of endorsement, awards and enshrinement.

Additionally, the recording industry operates to promote and distribute performers and

their music while securing market value through the institutional endorsement of

copyright law. Copyright laws are further legitimatized by associations that collect and

distribute royalties, and by musicians' unions (Leman-Langois 2005). The use of

technologies such as radio/television broadcasting and the Internet transmit 'real' *punk*

music internationally, increasing the potential for its global legitimization. Recent

advancements in reproduction technology have only increased the accessibility and

production of claims to authenticity in a variety of performers, fans and contexts (Negus

1999). These systems combine to distribute the authenticity ideal and speed up the process of authentication.

Third, *authenticity through constructed self-identity* relates to the idea of a 'true' self (Peterson 2005, 1089-90). Authentic self is idealized as consistency between the presentation of self and whom one claims to be (Goffman 1959), sought through a process of self-analysis and performance adjustment called self-reflexivity (Taylor 1991). Here, musicians adjust their performance to win the approval of their fans. Musicians' self-reflexivity is often hidden from fans so as to claim consistency between performance and character and to avoid causing doubt. However, in cases where dissonance occurs, such as a white musician performing *the blues*, performers will make a point to acknowledge the inconsistency (Albrecht 2008). This does not challenge the idea of constructed self-identity, rather, it sustains these notions through negative reinforcement. It reveals that notions of authenticity are legitimatized through performance, for instance, as exhibited by *punk* fans 'being' rather than 'doing' *punk* (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1991). A constructed, authentic identity is achieved through stories told by and about performers, revealing personal trajectories that mesh with cultural values such as anti-commercialism. A performer's ability to maintain coherence between belief and action suggests personal authenticity and legitimizes their claim to cultural membership.

Fourth, *status based authenticity* relates to the connection between musician and their product (2005, 1088). Status suggests a privileged perspective when framed as though 'outside' mainstream culture. In this sense, the performer is mythologized for offering a critical perspective unaffected by commercialism or normalcy. The 'outsider' performer and objects of their production such as recordings or concerts take on iconic

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status when consumed by fans. In turn, the musician's performance operates to transcend the mainstream and invites authentication by gatekeepers and others. Similarly, as fans articulate their concert experience through comments posted on blogsites or in magazines, it legitimizes musicians' claims to authenticity and works to define subcultural boundaries. Status is signified in part through the use of style. For instance, musicians use markers of fashion in innovative ways which set them apart from the mainstream.

Fifth, *authentic experience* relates to notions of existential or personal authenticity and engagement between artists and audiences (Peterson 2005, 1088-89). Peterson argues that subjective experience is staged, critically comprised of musicians and their audience and the environment in which they experience one another. Place here symbolizes meaning through associations with historical events, figures and artifacts, operating as an authenticity work site which allows claims-making and authentication. Culturally meaningful places generate a unique atmosphere in which subjective experience is stimulated, allowing fans and musicians to 'connect.' This engagement creates a unique memory, which fans take away from the concert and with which they define cultural boundaries, such as '*punkness*,' when comparing experiences with other fans (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1991). Fans gain status by their unique experiences, allowing them to claim membership with other, similarly experienced fans. The value of experience is correlated with the performer's ability to create a 'connection,' or memory with their fans. Subjective experience is created both publically in the concert setting and privately through a variety of modern technologies (Bull 2007).

2.4 The Social Construction of Authenticity in Music

Notions of authenticity are constructed in a variety of music cultures. In this section, I discuss research that looks at how authenticity is constructed in *the blues* and *grunge* using the model outlined above to identify sites of authenticity work. Building on this work, I will present an analysis of the construction of authenticity in *punk* and *indie.*

2.4.1 The Blues

An example of how authenticity in music is examined using the constructionist approach, is David Grazian's ethnographic research of Chicago *blues* clubs (2003). As I have mentioned earlier, Grazian reveals a collective quest for authenticity by musicians, club owners and consumers. Authenticity work is indicated by a variety of combinations of claims-making through style and presentation, and the pursuit of authentic experience, resulting in different versions of idealized *blues*. For instance, one style of *blues* clubs conveys a consistent African-American ethnic identity among performers and adherence to a canon of *blues* tunes, and a fairly narrow one at that. However, the venues in which the *blues* are performed range from a polished, conspicuously commercialized club accessible to the tourist friendly up-town area, to the more dilapidated south-end bar where authenticity is suggested by its status as 'outside' the mainstream tourist market. The club's disrepair and location in a working-class neighbourhood gives rise to a unique atmosphere suggesting authenticity by experience. These performers, café owners and patrons claim to be 'truer' to themselves than the uptown *blues* clubs in that they have not compromised their authenticity through commercialism. Contrasted with the working class *blues* bars, the tunes played in uptown clubs are not necessarily derived from a standardized canon, nor consistently performed by African-Americans. The difference in

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type of *blues* club reveals a variety of notions of authenticity among consumers, whose varying demands lead to the construction of various clubs.

Significantly, the pursuit of authenticity in Chicago *blues* bars is part of a global marketing strategy in which the city itself is presented as 'home of the *blues*.' Indeed, Chicago is among the most commercially successful North American urban centers in producing *blues* artists and music. However, the city carefully markets its clubs to cater to a variety of authenticity seekers. For instance, tourists drawn to Chicago for the *blues* are fulfilled by performances in the polished clubs, while more discerning consumers are drawn to either of the alternatives. To the tourist, authentic *blues* is sufficiently conveyed by skin colour while the club's commercialism is negligible. And yet the significance of ethnicity alone, is inadequate to the *blues* connoisseur who considers place, status, gender and history among other authenticity indicators. The presentation of a variety of cues which suggest authenticity does little to challenge the ideal of authenticity, rather it reinforces the notion among consumers, that the 'truly' authentic takes work to find. The city's reputation and marketing plan reveals a system of legitimacy whereby the *blues* is authenticated by its consumption, particularly in Chicago. Increased consumption bolsters the reputation of the city, which attracts consumers. Grazian's study is useful in revealing how notions of authenticity are constructed by performers, clubs and among music fans, and suggests variability in the notion of authentic *blues* and similarly, in *punk* and *indie*.

2.4.2 Grunge and the Economy of Indie

Mark Mazullo provides an example of how authenticity is constructed in *grunge* (2000). Here, Curt Cobain is examined for constructing his identity by emphasizing values

relating to 'genuineness,' and 'anti-commercialism.' Nihilistic self-deprecation and accessible musical styling mark Cobain's authenticity to constructed self. This becomes especially meaningful to his fans who reject hedonistic affluence common to late 1980s *pop*. The stylistically rough and raw energy of *grunge* music is reminiscent of *punk* rather than 1970s era commercial *arena rock*, or the staged flamboyance of 1980s *hair metal*. *Punk*'s anti-commercialism is interpreted as a meaningful indication of authenticity and is claimed by *grunge* culture, performers and fans. However, Nirvana's reception and fan growth should not be interpreted as an indication of critical success. Rather, Cobain's suicide indicates a conflict within the authenticity ideal: unmitigated commercial success does not mix with anti-commercialism. Cobain's conception of authentic *grunge* membership and personal authenticity includes the value of anti-commerciality, a sentiment that resonates with his initial audience, but conflicts with economic growth. This example demonstrates how the idealization of anti-commerciality as an indication of authenticity affects the process of authentication between performer and fan. When the ideal exceeds the reflexivity of the performer, authentication ceases.

To Simon Frith, anti-commerciality implies 'good' music, but it was not always so (2007). Although anti-commerciality is a cultural value conveyed in *grunge*, it has its roots in *punk* (Frith 1996; Hesmondhalgh 1999). Both genres and sub-cultures reacted to what was perceived as hedonistic self-indulgence in the *pop* music cultures of their respective eras. For instance, *grunge* members dissociated from the mainstream by wearing distressed baggy jeans, hiking boots, plaid shirts and growing long unkempt hair. This style signified anti-commercial pragmatism. Both *grunge* and *punk* demoted financial goals of maximized profit, production and distribution, and prioritized values

such as authenticity to constructed self as it improved the connection between performer and fan (Newman 2009; Hibbett 2005). In the 1970s, these goals led to the organization of record labels and distribution networks that were independent from mainstream industry labels. These labels were called Indie.

Initially, the work of indie labels was inextricably linked to bands called *punk*, but have since come to promote emerging musical genres that include *grunge* and *indie* (Hibbett 2005; Hesmondhalgh 1999). According to David Hesmondhalgh, the economic goals of bands and their labels affect the way anti-commercialism is framed and financial success is justified (1999). Though the first indie bands were *punk*, desire for musical innovation and global success necessitated the financial support of labels with expansive networks of distribution. With support, *indie* bands explored new sounds, escaped traditional categories such as *punk*, and won acceptance from new fans. Nonetheless, anti-commercialism remains a key value to *punk, grunge* and *indie* cultures as it continues to generate distinction from the mainstream, or *popular* music industry. Significantly, distinction allows consumers to claim authenticity through notions of autonomous, independent, or 'outsider' status (Newman 2009). However, *indie* status ironically depends on the notion of *pop* culture.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The cultural idealization of authenticity has only grown since its historical emergence in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this period emerged a system of meaning construction in which art came to represent cultural values and its consumption distinguished its possessor. The construction of difference was the focal point between high and low art, originality and mass production, Euro-American culture and *folk* or *primitive* cultures,

individuals and groups, and producers and consumers. However, the production of meaning, which resulted from this scheme, was circulated through the institutionalization of cultural production and its contextualized consumption, assuring the continued deployment of meaning, only extended through political struggles for equality between cultures, and with the development of mass communication. Authenticity has only become increasingly valuable to cultural producers and consumers, creating pockets of expression in which individuals and groups assert their distinction. Music is but one cultural product that exemplifies the construction of meaning by interactive persons, comprised of performers and fans, and those who work to promote relations between them. Actors work together to construct music cultures in various ways as a byproduct of their pursuit of authenticity.

In sum, notions of authenticity are used to create meaning in everyday life. Symbolic interactionist theory, which suggests that authenticity is rooted in the experience of the individual, overlooks contextual influences, such as the political-economic system in which meaning is formed. Although Adorno argues that existential authenticity operates to isolate individuals and divide sub-cultures, his view is limited to a singular, objective conception of true/false authenticity. Baudrillard argues that it is the assemblage of many meaningful objects that creates the notion of authenticity, however the 'truly' authentic is simply non-existent. Constructionist theory identifies the interaction of key actors and the contexts within which they construct notions of authenticity in music. From this perspective we can recognize music cultures not simply as representing values relating to authenticity, rather, as systems that work interactively to sustain and transform ideals and discourses of authenticity. Finally, recognizing the

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active pursuit of authenticity within systems such as music cultures allows us to discover

its pursuit in all cultures with which it is connected.

Constructionist research of *the blues* and *grunge* exemplifies authenticity's

construction in music. This research systematically divides conceptions of authenticity

into identifiable sites where authentication occurs, including the interplay of values,

objects and actors. In the *blues*, ethnicity plays an important role in determining

authenticity while anti-commercialism plays an important role in *punk* and *indie*. *Grunge*

provides insight into the trajectory of authenticity as it straddles *punk* and *indie*, revealing

an emphasis on self-constructed or personal authenticity. Peterson's model provides

ample framework for which to analyze the construction of authenticity in *punk* and *indie*.

This analysis explores new territory in the construction of authenticity in both *punk* and

indie, which will add to the sociology of music.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology I employed to understand how authenticity is constructed in the case of *punk* and *indie*. First, I will introduce the bands that I focus on, The Clash and Arcade Fire. Then, I will discuss discourse analysis and explain its usefulness as a method for analyzing meanings and notions of authenticity in music. In particular, discourse analysis provides insight into the way performers, fans and gatekeepers construct ideals of authentic *punk* or *indie* through the claims they make to cultural membership, the symbols they use to express this, as well as the stories they tell about themselves and the music. Finally, I will discuss the research design, including the framework I used to code and categorize data, as well as the data sources I analyzed. The benefit of comparative analysis for this project is in revealing how notions of authenticity, as they relate to music, are conceived specific to social context.

3.1 Introducing The Clash and Arcade Fire

The Clash formed in London, England at the end of 1976 amongst the first wave of British *punk* (Hebdige 1979). Although they are not credited with being the first *punk* band, they are arguably the most popularly and critically successful. The Clash were well received in their hometown of London, England, in cities around the world where they toured, and in their absence, in places where their fans traveled. According to biographer, Pat Gilbert, The Clash are the only band to emerge from London's *punk* scene to achieve multi-platinum status internationally (2004). Aside from their success, The Clash's significance is due to their distinction from the mainstream popular music of their era. Musically, they were brash and unsophisticated, and lyrically, they were politically

biased. However, this worked to their advantage in attracting the fan support of disenfranchised youth. Combined with the influence of their manager, Bernie Rhodes, The Clash attracted music industry support, which allowed them to pursue goals of international distribution and performance. They would achieve all of these things before disbanding in the mid-1980s.

The Clash was chosen for analysis because of their significance in defining *punk* and because of their steadfast fan support, even after breaking up. The band's originality, innovative musical and fashion style, and uniqueness allowed them to claim authenticity as *punk*, while simultaneously contributing to the process of defining *punk*'s cultural and musical boundaries. The band represents a set of values, which constitute *punk*, and which are legitimatized in historical accounts and espoused by fans. The lasting social impact that the band had upon *punk* culture indicates a powerful set of values, authenticity being one.

Arcade Fire achieved critical success in the early 2000s after years of self-directed touring, recording and distribution. They applied a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic to their business and performance, including self-customized clothing and limited the influence of the music industry on song writing and recording. This approach to performance suggested originality, autonomy and independence, and attracted the attention of devoted *indie* fans. In February 2011, Arcade Fire was awarded two Grammys for their third album, *The Suburbs*. Although it is arguably the highest music award that a band could receive, the recognition garnered a lukewarm response from their fans, matched by a lukewarm response from the mainstream media.

Arcade Fire was chosen for analysis because of their success as an *indie* band, which has garnered widely international fan support. In addition, they are similar to The Clash in that they are an exemplary band, representative of what is known as *indie*. From inception, Arcade Fire's originality, style and uniqueness allowed the band to claim membership in *indie*, while contributing to the definition of *indie* culture. In a genre that has since been criticized for self-indulgent pastiche, challenging its cultural status-based authenticity (Newman 2010; Maddux 2010), Arcade Fire has managed to attract the endorsement of *rock*'s critical elite. The band represents *indie*, yet claims an elite status in popular culture. The consistency of values presented by Arcade Fire, reflected in the press and celebrated by their fans, suggests that they are an influential social force. The band's consistent embodiment of *indie* values exemplifies the construction of authenticity.

3.2 Discourse Analysis

According to Stuart Hall, meaning is embedded in cultural processes and practices (1997, 2). This implies fluidity, that meanings either shift or stabilize according to interaction between actors, the modes by which they are represented, and the contexts in which they are negotiated. Hall attributes meaning construction not only to the culture in which it is articulated, but to the language that is used to represent it. Although shared meaning requires a perception of cultural congruence, it does not exist independent of language, which is used to translate meaning to concepts that are signified in words, sound and images. Language serves as the basis or tool by which meaning is coded and disseminated throughout culture, a process that Hall calls the system of representation (1997, 17). However, language does not exist independent of meaning and action, rather

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it is given meaning in its constant reproduction and circulation, by association to historically situated, or institutionally established social interaction. As such, cultural theorist John Hartley argues for a study of discourse instead:

> Unlike 'language', the term *discourse* itself is both a noun and a verb. So it is easier to retain the sense of discourse as an *act*, where the noun 'language' often seems to refer to a *thing*. In its established usages, discourse referred both to the interactive process and the end result of thought and communication. Discourse is the social process of making and reproducing sense(s). (1994, 93)

Following Hartley's argument, the study of discourse allows us to analyze events as though they are comprised of meanings, which are represented, not only through language, but also through visual and material means. If analyzed seriously, representations in music, such as values of authenticity, can be interpreted in order to unpack their underlying meanings and relational organizing effects.

Discourse analysis (DA), as inspired by Michel Foucault, enables a thorough investigation of representations of culture through an analysis of discourse in order to interpret meaning (Hall 1997, 41-56). According to visual methodologist, Gillian Rose, Foucault's method of analysis considers that all social practices entail meaning, and as meanings shape and influence conduct, all practices have a discursive aspect (2007, 141-195). She states:

> Discourse has a quite specific meaning. It refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world, which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it. (Rose 2007, 142)

A discourse is not just one text, statement, or source. It is a mode of thinking about and knowing that can be seen in a range of texts, and in operation in a number of institutional sites in society. When these all refer to the same object, or use the same set of practices, it

constitutes a discursive formation: a pattern of discursive *events* which bring into being a common object across a number of sites.

Rose defines the multiplicity of forms through which discourse is articulated as intertextuality: "the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts" (2007, 142). Alternately, cultural theorist Arthur Berger provides an adequate definition for this study in which he states, "Intertextuality is a reference to previously created texts, styles of expression, or genres by subsequently created texts through the use of allusion, imitation, adaptation, or modification" (2007, 226). It is important to consider intertextuality in the construction of authenticity in music culture particularly as meaning is conveyed and interpreted by a variety of actors for a variety of purposes. For instance, *punk* and *indie* bands often appropriate fashion in such a way as to represent an 'outside' perspective relative to mainstream culture, claimed through the use of styles which are associated with past counter-cultures. Intertextual meanings in fashion operate so as to suggest status-based authenticity. Peterson's framework provides an adequate model for recognizing the use of intertextuality in the construction of authenticity by identifying multiple sites where authenticity work occurs (2005). DA complements this model in that it considers textual and visual cues, which tie its user to meaningful past events by association.

Foucault recognizes the preeminence of power to knowledge. Rose captures this argument in the following statement:

> Foucault insisted that knowledge and power are imbricated one in the other, not only because all knowledge is discursive and all discourse is saturated with power, but because the most powerful discourses, in terms of the productiveness

of their social effects, depend on assumptions and claims that their knowledge is true. (2007, 144)

Drawing on this insight, the most powerful claims to authentic *punk* or *indie* are those which are accepted as 'true.' DA simply investigates how 'truth' is constituted in order to reveal the contingencies of that knowledge. Overall, discourse analysis provides an adequate method so as to investigate the ways in which authenticity is constructed in music culture. DA does not restrict this project to a study of language or text alone, rather, all interactive behaviour consists of meaning, its interpretation and maintenance. It allows for the identification of 'authenticity' work in a variety of sites and range of processes. Textual, visual and sonic cues consist of symbolic resources, which when analyzed using DA, reveal the ways in which authenticity is constructed in music culture.

3.3 Research Design

Peterson's authenticity framework provides an adequate model in so far as it allows us to identity five sites in which authenticity is constructed. Data sources were analyzed and categorized according to Peterson's model. Consistently recurring themes relating to authenticity were categorized according to site and interpreted so as to reveal their underlying meaning(s) (see figure 3.1).

AUTHENTICITY WORK	CRITERIA
- Authenticity through Cultural Identity: Membership	- Claims to group membership signified through fashion, presentation, musical style, ethic, role performance, essentialism
- Authenticity through Endorsement: The Elasticity of Authenticity	- 'Torch passing' performances, duets, ties to lineage, endorsement
- Authenticity to Constructed Self	- Self-reflexivity, use of visual or narrative story-telling, mythologizing, consistency of character (between belief and performance)
- Authenticity through Status Identity	- Imbuing products/things with meaning based on author's 'outsider' status, generating difference (from mainstream), celebrated for innovation
- Seeking Authentic Experience	- Embellishing/staging subjective experience; stressing uniqueness/originality of experience; space, time and place (atmosphere)

Table 3.1

Peterson's framework categorizes sites in which authenticity work recurs, and/or discourses of authenticity are constructed. Each site is conceptually distinguished in order to allow for analysis, however, in reality they often overlap. For instance, *punk* or *indie*

cultural membership is signified by a band's use of fashion or musical style, and operates

as a claim to membership, but is often interpreted in the context of performance, in which

experience is conjured, influenced by the endorsement of an established artist. The

consistency of a band or fan's presented style with its respective referent culture suggests

authenticity. Sites where these criteria were recognized were categorized as authenticity

work through cultural identity. This is distinctive from the authenticity that is signified by

endorsement. In this case, a band joins a lineage of established musicians, often perceived

as innovative in their field, through 'torch-passing' ceremonies, such as a duet or tribute

performance. Thus, the authenticity of the elite class of musicians stretches to

accommodate the endorsed, often through intertextual references. In the case of

authenticity to constructed self, bands attempt to present themselves in such a way that is

perceived as consistent with their beliefs. This is different from membership in that

performers make adjustments in reaction to their fans' reception of performance. This

focuses on the active work of bands and gatekeepers in constructing their identity.

Whereas membership considers claims-making in a static time or place, authenticity

through constructed identity varies across a band's career and according to changes

related to achieved success. Authenticity through status identity operates as an exclusive

site of authenticity work in which bands are valued according to their position relative to

what is contemporaneously considered mainstream culture. Thus, a band's ability to

innovate musically works to set them apart from other bands without compromising their

membership in an existing genre. This 'outside' status translates to objects such as

recordings, instruments, or even band members' provenance. Finally, authenticity

through experience operates as an exclusive site of authenticity work in that it allows

bands to connect with their fans in unique ways. The originality of performance

experience is valued in the creation of memory and operates as a site where music culture

is created apart from the mainstream. It is different from status-based authenticity in that

it involves the subjective experience of fans in a specific time and place. Similar to

constructed identity, experience supports the idea of personal authenticity. Within each

site of authenticity work, actors are identified so as to reveal their role in the circuit of

authentication. (see Figure 3.1)

The Circuit of
Authentication

PERFORMER
the musician's claim to
authenticity as performed

GATEKEEPER
the legitimation of authenticity
by the culture industry:
managers, producers, journalists,
historians, and critics

RECEIVER
the legitimation of authenticity
by the consumer

Figure 3.1

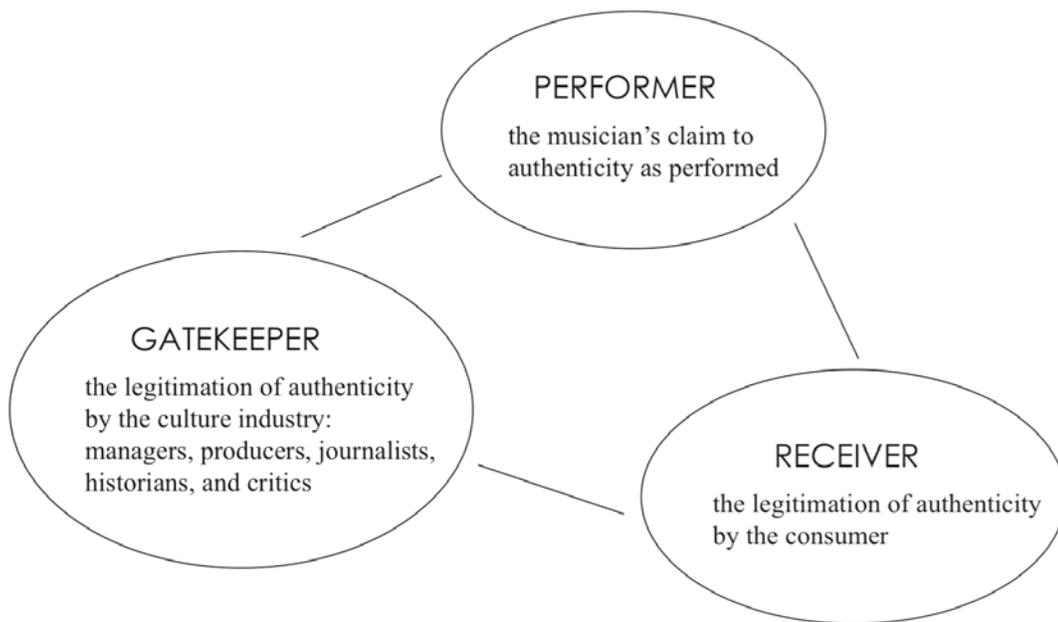The method of categorizing aspects of authenticity and identifying actors in the process

of authentication operates to de-naturalize or de-mythologize notions of authenticity.

Rather than analyze the isolated cases of music performers, this study takes into account

the reciprocal dynamic between three active figures in the construction of discourses of

authenticity in *indie* and *punk* music.

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DA considers knowledge formation as constituting a productive force (Hall 1997, 44-53). Thus, sites are analyzed for how actors use knowledge to organize systems of objects and subjectivities in order to claim membership to either *punk* or *indie*. The level of influence over meanings of authenticity reflects different situational contexts of actors. For instance, those who are working within the music industry exert more influence as they often have more symbolic resources to create and convey meanings about authentic *punk* or *indie*. The circuit of authentication allows for identification of such imbalances between actors.

Peterson's framework allows for a careful analysis of music culture in order to investigate the ways in which authenticity is constructed. Categories are systematically applied to the data, which allows for comparison between The Clash and Arcade Fire. Despite contextual differences between these bands, a comparison reveals the resilience of the authenticity ideal today. The circuit of authentication allows us to identify the interactive roles played by actors in the construction of authenticity, and avoids the problematic of recreating notions such as the artist as genius, or the consumer as autonomous creator of meaning. Although the interdependence of performers, gatekeepers and fans, in creating authenticity, may not be equally balanced, Peterson's framework and the circuit allows us to recognize these imbalances.

3.4 Data Sources

Discursive analysis was applied to all data in this study. According to Gillian Rose, it is important to produce a model in which application is consistent in its repetition (2007, 148-155). Repetition supports a congruent understanding of the construction of authenticity in music culture, which in turn allows examples to be compared. For the

purpose of this paper, data sources were selected for their iconography or subject matter rather than solely based on the researcher's intuition (Rose 2007, 150). Following art historian, Panofsky, iconography concerns itself with the underlying meaning of a work of art as opposed to its form (Rose 2007, 150-1). Iconography allowed me to identify sites of authenticity work in which the underlying meanings were authenticity related, conveyed not only visually, but through narrative and aural cues as well. Type of authenticity was categorized according to Peterson's framework. For instance, a video performance of The Clash consists of signifiers, which operate as iconic indications of authentic *punk* membership, such as the band's fashion and musical style. In particular, my data consisted of the following biographies, interviews, articles and videos:

The Clash

Biography:

 Gilbert, Pat. 2004. *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of the Clash*, London:

 Aurum Press

Documentary:

 Temple, Julien (dir). 2007. *Joe Strummer: the Future is Unwritten*. Amanda

 Temple (producer)

Live Performance Video with Textual Fan Comments:

 "The Clash - White Riot Live (1978 Victoria Park London)" 2011 youtube.com

 Accessed 13 June,

 "The Clash - "London Calling" & "Train in Vain" (Fridays)" 2011 youtube.com

 Accessed 13 June,

"The Clash - US Festival 1983 - Rock the Casbah" youtube.com Accessed 13 June, 2011

Arcade Fire

Journalistic Articles / Concert Reviews:

Eccleston, Danny. 2010. "Arcade Fire Roll Out New Tunes In Hackney Triumph." *Mojo*. mojo4music.com 7 July, 2010 Accessed 13 July, 2011

Empire, Kitty. 2010. "Arcade Fire: Hackney Empire, London." *The Observer*. guardian.co.uk 11 July 2010 Accessed 10 June, 2011

Frere-Jones, Sasha. 2010. "The Dotted Line: What do record labels do now?" *The New Yorker*. newyorker.com, 16 August, 2010. Accessed 16 July, 2011.

Rodger, Scott. 2007. "Arcade Fire - Neon Bible (2007 advance)." *gyeeker.* gyeeker.blogspot.com, January 27, 2007. Accessed July 14, 2011. http://gyeeker.blogspot.com/2007/01/arcade-fire-neon-bible-2007-advance.html

Montgomery, James. 2011. "Arcade Fire Manager Responds to Steve Stoute's Grammy Gripe." mtv.com, 24 February, 2011. Accessed 16 July, 2011

Petridis, Alexis. 2010. "Arcade Fire: The Suburbs." *The Guardian*. 29 July, 2010, taken from guardian.co.uk, 13 July, 2011

"Anatomy of a Not-so-Secret Arcade Fire Show" *Timbre Tantrum blog*, timbretantrum.com, 16 July, 2011

Rolling Stone online biography. 2011. rollingstone.com Accessed 10 June, 2011

2011. "New Music: Arcade Fire feat David Byrne – Speaking in Tongues," guardian.co.uk, 24 May, 2011 Accessed 10 June, 2011

"Portrait of a Personal Manager: Arcade Fire's Scott Rodger" *The Heretic*.

musicbusinessheretic.wordpress.com Accessed16 July, 2011

Interviews:

Kandell, Steve. 2007. "The Feeling's Mutual," *Spin*. December, 2007. Spin Media

LLC/ The McEnvoy Group LLC

O'Hagan. 2010. "Arcade Fire: 'The clichéd rock life never seemed that cool to

us,'" *The Observer*. 28 November, 2010. guardian.co.uk, Accessed 13 June, 2011

Weiner, Jonah. 2007. "The Salvation Army" *Blender*. May, 2007. Dennis

Publications

2007. "Us Kids Know" fan blogsite. arcadefire.com 1 February, 2007

Autobiographical articles:

Lewis, John. 2011. "An Audience With Arcade Fire." *Uncut*. July, 2011. IPC

Media

Live Performance Video with Textual Fan Comments:

2011. "Arcade Fire at the Grammys 2011 - "Month of May." youtube.com

13 June 2011

2011. "Arcade Fire - Ready to Start." youtube.com 13 June, 2011

2011. "Arcade Fire - Wake Up." youtube.com 13 June, 2011

The data was coded as per Peterson's categories and actors according to the circuit of authentication. In my analysis, I was concerned with key themes or values that characterized the authentic ideal, particularly, those which makeup notions of 'real' *indie*

and 'real' *punk*. For instance, *indie* values include *blasé* autonomy,[9] independence, DIY, genuineness, eccentricity, self-realization, and personal authenticity as represented in style, fashion, and performance. These values are pursued as though meaningful to the individual when contrasted with mainstream norms, which are framed as though devoid of meaning and constrictive. Thus, discursive formations of the dichotomy 'mainstream versus *indie*' were identified, as well as the *indie* value that was proffered in response. The live performance of *indie* is characterized by a subjective experience in which fans are meant to perceive spontaneity or personal authenticity, unencumbered by commercial goals. This is meaningful to fans and performers that espouse anti-commerciality, and works as an ethic, influencing conduct and fashion. Michel Maffesoli calls this, "The Ethic of Aesthetics" (1991), and notes a relation between the stimulation of emotions and the generation of notions of an authentic collectivity, particularly in concert. Although all performances and bands are characterized by an aesthetic ethic, *indie* and *punk* is characterized by a deliberately anti-commercial presentation to which a community of fans are attracted. Examples of *punk* themes or values which were identified in the data include anarchy, anti-establishment, anti-commercialism, anti-racism, local politics or relevance, creativity and DIY. Similar to *indie* values, these are idealized in response to a relationship between the individual and the mainstream, which is framed as though meaningless and restrictive on the individual. However, *punk* is characterized by a greater sense of collectivity than in *indie* culture. Discursive formations of 'real *punk*' and 'real

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[9] *Indie* fans' middle-class background is characterized by more affluence than *punk*'s working-class fans. In this case, *blasé* autonomy is common to the former, while the latter is characterized by a more militant autonomy.

indie,' which are underpinned by these particular values, were identified in order to reveal how they contribute to notions of authenticity.

The data sources related to The Clash are fewer in number than those relating to Arcade Fire. This is because of differences in career trajectory from one band to the other. The Clash's entire career is made accessible through Pat Gilbert's biography in which he reveals the band's identity as a carefully constructed. In this sense, Gilbert approaches The Clash not as a mysterious, artist as genius entity, whose authenticity is bestowed upon them by a metaphysical source. Rather, his biography reveals key events in the band's claim to *punk* membership and its negotiation throughout their career. Several journalistic interviews and key television performances discussed therein supply ample examples of the construction of authenticity for the purpose of this project. The biography itself operates as a gatekeeper account and supports the The Clash's claims to represent the 'real deal' as a *punk* band. The post-career documentary provides examples of endorsement and identity construction, while the video performances and fan comments reveal further examples of gatekeeper legitimatization and authentication respectively. In comparison, Arcade Fire's shorter career and lack of concise biography demands a greater number of data sources, the majority of which are journalistic. Although it is possible to capture an adequate analysis of the band's claims to authenticity (membership, status-based, etc.) and fan authentication with just a few sources, additional sources allow for verification of claims-making and authentication across Arcade Fire's career. A limitation to this design, however, is the fact that I have relied on Gilbert's historical account to provide key events in The Clash's history such as journalistic interviews and fan legitimization, rather than sourcing them separately. As all

of the data is secondary, it is public and voluntarily published. For this reason, analyzing these sources does not violate subjects' rights to privacy.

The three video archived performances per band and subsequent fan responses, which are posted below the video on Internet-based websites, are analyzed in order to reveal the fan's legitimizing role in the process of authentication. I did not look at fanzines as this style of articulation of fan support was reflected in the video comments, on the 'us kids know' blogsite and in personalized magazine interviews. According to Rose (2007), DA capably identifies the ways in which receivers interpret intended meanings in bands' performances. In this case, fans are considered an influential actor in their consumption and legitimatization of authenticity claims-makers, including both performers and gatekeepers. The first 250 comments of each video were analyzed for fans' conceptions of authenticity and coded according to Peterson's model. Although some videos garnered over 3350 comments from fans, many were found to be repetitive after the first dozen. The analysis of 250 comments per video provided an adequate amount of data to understand fans' construction of authenticity.

The music of The Clash and Arcade Fire is not examined according to methods of musicological analysis. Rather, DA offers the advantage of considering contextual aspects that musicology often overlooks (Roy and Dowd 2010). Music is considered a discursive form, consisting of tonality, rhythm, timbre and notation and as such, it is meaningful. Thus, sounds are determinedly combined to emphasize particular meanings and are simultaneously interpreted according to meaning structures. For this study, musical data is compared across three examples per band and then from one band to the other. The advantage to analyzing the cultural makeup of music rather than the

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musicological makeup is that it fits within the constructionist approach - music is not inherently meaningful (Shepherd and Wicke 1997). For example, the ways in which The Clash and Arcade Fire perform conveys meanings that relate to *punk* and *indie* such as 'genuineness,' or 'anti-commercialism' that work to attract the legitimation of fans and gatekeepers, and that can be variously interpreted as a claim to cultural group membership, as embodying personal authenticity, as a claim to status-based authenticity, and so on. Performance reveals connections between performers and their fans.

3.5 Limitations of Research

A limitation to DA is the number of sources that may be deemed adequate to a study of the construction of authenticity (Rose 2007, 169-170). Since meanings can be constructed in an infinite number of forms, this project could conceivably never end. Indeed, I have often wondered throughout this project if this would be the case. However, I have considered the sources included as comprising an adequate amount in order to present a persuasive argument for the construction of authenticity in *punk* and *indie*. Any fewer sources and this project may be discredited as a hunch, while any more sources and it may become plodding. However, this reveals a more significant limitation: the claim to 'truth' that this project is perceived to attempt. As this thesis considers authenticity to be socially constructed, it avoids an objective verification of this claim. DA is limited to presenting a modestly persuasive argument, or a particular perspective on the construction of authenticity.

Foucault's method reminds the researcher and reader of their subjectivity. Rather than an autonomous impartial judge of positivist science, the reader will do well to consider the context in which knowledge is conceived and challenged. DA is a method

that relies on subjective interpretations to analyze data. This raises some limitations as to the findings and influence of the researcher's own perspective. Thus, this research has been influenced by my own career as a professional drummer in *indie rock* bands from Winnipeg, Canada, and my attempts to construct my identity as an authentic member in this community. Although my experiences inform my initial conceptual overview of music culture, including sites in which authenticity may be constructed, I often perceive of that culture as though naturally occurring. My interest in 'constructing authenticity' stems from questions about taste and my experience with music. By no means do I propose an objective reading and verification of what I consider to be good music, nor is this a verification of 'authenticity.' Rather, DA compensates for any such limitations in that it considers all aspects of culture in order to investigate the knowledge-based construction of authenticity.

3.6 Summary

Regardless as to the reasons of their success, The Clash and Arcade Fire, their audiences, and the cultural gatekeepers that give account of their performances, comprise an interactive circuit in which authenticity is socially, thus discursively constructed, and which provides an ample source for analysis. A key aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which specific processes, symbolic performances and narratives combine to suggest notions of authenticity in *punk* and *indie*. A presupposition of discourse analysis is that meaning is embedded in cultural processes and practices, conveyed in textual, visual and aural cues, which take their meaning both from existing knowledge, and the knowledge that results from its usage. The circulation of this knowledge around common events constitutes the cultures to which actors claim membership. This study pays

attention to discursive claims-making processes, and the signification of such claims in order to identify meanings related to authenticity. Sites where authenticity work occurs are categorized systematically in order to allow for comparison between bands, so as to reveal historical and contextual differences in the construction of authenticity, and its resilience as a cultural ideal.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Punk and The Clash*

> "Punk should either send a message or simply kick some ass, it shouldn't just be a slightly more dumber and faster generic version of heavy rock."
>
> > \- FAN youtube.com (2011)

> "The point is Rhodes favoured people with edge, passion, swagger and conviction."
>
> > \- PAT GILBERT *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of The Clash* (2004)

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the analysis of data related to the band, The Clash, and the

construction of notions of authenticity around it. The construction of authenticity

involves three actors: first, The Clash and its musicians, as they make claims to personal

authenticity and to cultural membership in the *punk* subculture; second, cultural

gatekeepers, including biographers and documentarians; and third, fans as they legitimize

the band's claims. What is considered 'real' *punk* is characterized by three dominant

themes or values relative to what is considered mainstream culture: anti-commercialism;

anti-establishment attitude, including anarchy and anti-racism; and, an aesthetic ethic

made up of DIY attitude, pro-creativity and the *punk* experience. It is this dialectical

relationship with the mainstream, manifested in the production of music, style and

associations between actors that claim membership, which suggests that *punk* is a

subculture from which actors construct meaning (Hebdige 1979). The widespread success

of *punk* music, among other cultural forms, and its political values, have established *punk*

as an aesthetic, a means of both social and musical differentiation. *Punk* symbolizes an

ethical orientation marked by political awareness and action in the everyday life of its

members. The Clash is a formative actor in *punk* culture, its value system, and its musical

aesthetic. The Clash and the influential actors involved in the band's claim to *punk*

membership are scrutinized here for the ways in which they construct discourses of authenticity, or what consists of 'real' *punk*.

4.1.1 Authenticity through Cultural Identity/Membership: *Anti-Commercialism*

Discourse around 'real' *punk* typically positions bands against the commerciality of parent, or mainstream culture (Hebdige 1979; Hesmondhalgh 1999). In the mid-1970s, young, would-be *punk* music fans conceived of mainstream *rock* culture and its fans as though archaic and therefore irrelevant in their representation of current events (Palmer 1995, 259-79). Any counter-cultural or 'anti-establishment' stance that *rock* might have taken towards mainstream culture in the 1950s or 60s had since been co-opted by the structural dynamics of the recording industry upon which *rock* became dependent.[10] According to *rock* historian Robert Palmer, *pop* and *rock* stars were perceived as pawns in an international business called 'corporate *rock*:' capitalistic music promotion with a goal of wealth accumulation. Increasingly, the industry produced extravagant concerts in large venues, such as arenas and stadiums in major world cities, and outdoor festival sites such as Woodstock and Glastonbury. By the early 1970s, however, the growth of corporate *rock* was supplanting traditional forms of art and entertainment, such as the dramatic arts, thereby contributing to the decay of small to mid-sized clubs and halls. The *rock* stars themselves were perceived by their fans to be increasingly insular, moving into country mansions and private studios. Performers were regarded as though isolated from reality by increasing rates of drug abuse or fame and fortune. In cities such as New York

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[10] The music industry consisted of major record labels, including teams of managers and agents, including, artist and repertoire (A&R), booking, and publicity agents. By the late 1960s, labels had become efficient promoters, establishing performing artists on a global scale.

and London, characterized by high rates of crime and unemployment, a skeptical youth

subculture emerged that rejected the auspices of the previous generation. To these youth,

'peace and love' had run its course, and 'name brand' *rock* was devoid of meaning, both

co-opted by the culture industry in the interest of capital accumulation. The combination

of the previous generation's values and corporate *rock*'s agenda were perceived as

inadequate and inaccurate to represent the plight of these youth (Hebdige 1979; Palmer

1995). In reaction to the perceived failings of *rock*, *punk* focused on bridging the gap

between performer and fan, and emphasized cultural values such as anti-commercialism,

anarchy, and DIY.

There are several instances in which The Clash claimed *punk* membership by anti-

commercialism. However, despite this apparent opposition, the band's legitimacy was

found to be conflicted throughout their career (Gilbert 2004; Temple 2007). Gilbert's

biographical account contains many cases in which The Clash claim *punk* membership

through the ways in which they deal with their contradictions. For instance, they

appeared to compromise anti-commerciality when they signed to major label, CBS in

January 1977 (Gilbert 2004, 137-40). Gilbert suggests that although The Clash had

already claimed authentic *punk* membership by this point, it was brought into question by

their new record contract. Gilbert gives an account of a *punk* magazine's reaction:

> Like many others, *Sniffin' Glue*'s Mark Perry thought the group's anti-
> establishment stance meant they'd finance their own records…or at least sign to
> an independent label. It seemed ludicrous to him that The Clash, so contemptuous
> of the music industry, should become willing cogs in its machinery. (2004, 139)

The band's contract signing and subsequent gatekeeper reaction operate as sites of

authenticity work. Perry, the *punk* journalist and cultural gatekeeper, exclaimed that CBS

had represented the commercialist establishment, and that The Clash's contract with them challenged their claim to *punk* authenticity. Finally, Perry hyperbolized, "Punk died the day The Clash signed to CBS" (Gilbert 2004, 139). In defense, The Clash argued that the contract invested them with complete creative control of their music production and the publishing rights to their music. The band's argument was an attempt to justify their contract and to retain their *punk* membership without losing status. In 1977, this debate would have had serious implications for both the young band and the definition of *punk* culture.

The Clash claimed anti-commercialism throughout their career, however, it was often compromised by success. The data contained several instances where the band negotiated these contradictions. For instance, success allowed the band to make bolder claims to authentic *punk*, as though their membership was unaffected by gatekeeper criticism. For instance, in 1999, twenty-three years after The Clash's first *Sniffin' Glue* article, lead singer Joe Strummer responded to journalist Perry's accusations with a claim that The Clash's international success justified their signing to a major label: "I can see the point that we could have stayed homemade, started our own labels, the stuff people do nowadays, but it needed to break out and reach America and be global. Someone had to take the bull by the horns and shake it" (Gilbert 2004, 140). This quotation operates as an attempt to justify signing to a label and maintain *punk* membership, despite contradicting the value of anti-commerciality. Nonetheless, The Clash's membership was influenced less by gatekeepers than by their fans. Although The Clash's claim of anti-commercialism was compromised by their contract dealings with the music industry, it was justified as enabling other *punk* values, such as pro-creativity, DIY, and anarchy.

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Writing in 2005, Gilbert's account supports their canonization as an innovative *punk* band. [11]

4.1.2 Membership: *Anti-establishment attitude/Anarchy*

Several examples of discourse around *punk* present mainstream culture as irrelevant and meaningless, thus opposed to *punk*. In 1976, the disdain that music fans had for corporate *rock* was also informed by their experience of poor social conditions. According to Hebdige (1979), the experiences of high unemployment, racism related to immigration issues, and the cultural segregation of youth were attributed to mainstream culture as though systemic. Thus, the perception that mainstream culture was to blame provided the target for anarchistic *punk* values.

The Clash claimed *punk* membership through their representation of anti-establishment attitude, beginning with their name. According to Gilbert: "The band were finally named by Paul [the bass player] after he'd noticed the word 'clash' cropping up several times in an edition of the *Evening Standard*. It seemed to suit who they were and what they were creating: a clash of personalities, a clash against reactionary values, a clashing dissonant sound" (2004, 95). Gilbert's account suggests that the band was aware of the subcultural values, anti-establishment and anarchy, and that they chose their name based on its perceived representation of *punk* culture. Conversely, these *punk* specific associations were galvanizing, limiting the degree to which the band could experiment,

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[11] Canonization refers to a cumulative authentication following The Clash's career of claims making and their institutionalization in museums such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Since disbanding, The Clash no longer actively seeks authentication, however, they remain beneficiaries in the circuit of authentication. Thus, authentication can result in canonization. Although canonization occurs later in the process of authentication as an endowment of status, it is not unpacked in this essay.

politically, musically and stylistically.[12] Gilbert's account supports a homological

approach to music: he assumes that *punk* cultural values, such as anarchy, are represented

in *punk* music (Shepherd and Wicke 1997). Although his account operates to establish

this representation as naturally occurring, it is not necessarily accurate to assume that The

Clash was *punk*; rather, the processes of the circuit of authentication reifies *punk* values

to musicians, gatekeepers and fans.

The Clash's anarchistic politic was captured in their first full-length interview

with *Sniffin' Glue*. According to biographer Pat Gilbert, the interview set the political

tone for most of the band's career, revealing an ideology that was largely influenced by

their manager, yet claimed by the band as their own:

> The chief thrust was that people were being misinformed, and they saw it as The
> Clash's role to educate them about what was really going on. (Joe: 'I just feel like
> no one's telling me anything, even if I read every paper, watch TV and listen to
> the radio!') Mick emphasizes that the group are concerned with the politics of the
> street… The group, they explain are also anti-hedonist. They stand for 'change
> and creativity.' People, according to Mick, have become apathetic and boring.
> Bands which simply enjoy themselves… are 'taking their audience for a ride,
> feeding the audience shit!' Joe considers that 'the situation is far too serous for
> enjoyment, man… If The Clash could lay their hands on some money, they add,
> they would 'get something together immediately' in terms of staging events and
> creating new venues for groups. (2004, 112)

Gilbert's account of The Clash's first full-length interview reveals some of the ways in

which the band makes claims to *punk* membership by embracing *punk* values: anti-

commercialism, local politics, anarchy, pro-creativity, and genuineness. First, The Clash

claimed that mainstream media misinterprets the politics affecting *punk* culture. This

implies both that an alternate *punk* reality existed that is closer to the truth yet hidden

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[12] Throughout the biography, I noticed that The Clash would use intertextual, and/or
multiple references of authenticity; indicators such as endorsement and status based
authenticity to maintain their *punk* membership. This will be discussed more below.

from the public, and that the band knows the 'truth.' Second, The Clash re-emphasized that their politics are localized, increasing the potential for endorsement from fans who are affected by local socio-political injustices and who value its relevance. Third, The Clash claimed *punk* membership by suggesting that their music is serious, rather than merely entertaining, trivial and fleeting. Seriousness is inferred by singing about political injustices, such as racism, which effect fans' everyday lives, and functioned to distinguish *punk* bands from popular bands that dealt with injustice by simply masking it. Finally, the band claimed membership through notions of solidarity with *punk* bands and fans, by suggesting that they would reinvest commercial success back into *punk* culture and its bands. This claim confirms anti-commerciality as a valuable *punk* ethic. In each claim, The Clash supported the notion of an authentic *punk* culture, set apart from the mainstream, and based on concepts such as 'truth,' local relevance, anti-racism, anarchy, and anti-commerciality. Their claims support the idea of *punk* as a distinct music culture from corporate *rock*.

To accommodate the contradiction between commercial success and *punk* membership, The Clash used interviews to emphasize specific *punk* values. For instance, in 1982, The Clash were asked to support the *rock* band, The Who, on their farewell American stadium tour. With The Who's invitation, and the recent success of the single, "Rock the Casbah," The Clash were faced with the prospect of touring much like the corporate *rock* bands they once challenged. After much deliberation, the band agreed to it, but only after shifting some idealized *punk* perspectives so as to appear to remain consistent with *punk* culture. Biographer, Pat Gilbert gives an account of the band's justification through road manager, Kosmo Vinyl:

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The Clash's ideology was being bent out of shape again. I ask Kosmo what he believed The Clash's values amounted to at that time. 'Truth and rights, I guess,' he answers. 'Don't waste your time on Van Halen, there's a world out there. Right at the beginning we said we were anti-racist, pro-creative, against ignorance. We thought our songs and entertainment should have content and be informed. They should have integrity. I don't think any of that had changed. Bernard [The Clash's manager,] was interested in changing the whole culture. You don't have to have crappy clothes, bands, music. It should all be great, fantastic, exciting - and we believed in that… Personally, I didn't like those stadium shows[13] and I didn't like festivals. But it wasn't about personal preferences, it was bigger than that. (2004, 326-27).

The discourse of Gilbert's interview reveals a site of authenticity work. Kosmo claimed that the band's politics in 1982 remained consistent with their politics in 1976, albeit international in scope. Thus, in 1982, Van Halen was discursively constructed to represent the 'content-less' antithesis to *punk* in America that corporate *rock* was in 1976 London. Although the stadium shows appeared to sever The Clash's intimate connection with their fans, it was justified by the fact that their core values remained consistent, and that they were exposed to larger crowds, arguably increasing the opportunity for *punk* growth. Gilbert's biographical account operates to legitimatize The Clash's claim to *punk* authenticity by highlighting the rationale behind stadium performances.

Fans' reactions to membership claims revealed various *punk* values and the process of authentication. While some reinforce notions of authenticity and The Clash, others question it. For instance, an American concert fan revealed her interpretation of a 1982 Clash stadium performance as in-authentic *punk*: "They're not punk, no. They're

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[13] Concert venue is an important site of authenticity work as it affects the fan's experience of a band and their music. This is discussed more below in the section on experience.

just what the Stones[14] are" (Temple 2007, 73:30). Julien Temple's documentary reveals international variation in fans' perception of authentic *punk*. This fan lumps The Clash together with a corporate *rock* band, perceived as similar in presentation. In this sense, the American fan still associated values such as anti-establishment, seriousness and anti-commercialism with *punk*, however, her perception of the stadium concert, and resultant discourse, indicating that it violated these values.

4.1.3 Membership: *DIY/pro-creativity/bricolage*

Punks utilize objects that are associated with dominant cultural meanings, and arrange them in order to achieve their own goals, effectively transforming their meaning. The Clash used this process, called *bricolage*, throughout their career, adapting to perceived changes in mainstream culture, and their fans' definitions of *punk* membership (Hebdige 1979). Their counter-cultural approach to style suggested *punk* values of DIY and pro-creativity, examples of which were found throughout the data.

The Clash claimed *punk* membership through their presentation and the use of style, in both fashion and music. The *punk* aesthetic was sharpened by frequent debates about style and its associated meanings. For instance, in an interview with *Sniffin' Glue*, Joe Strummer underscored the connection between image and attitude, fashion and outlook: "Like trousers, like brain!" (Gilbert 2005, 113). According to this comment, style is a notion that is discursively constructed by members of the band, in this case, as indicative of character. *Punk* style emphasized the individual's responsibility to signify meanings, while remaining consistent with cultural values, such as bricolage, DIY and

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[14] The Rolling Stones are an example of a band that plays many shows in stadiums and arenas.

pro-creativity. For instance, in the documentary about Joe Strummer and The Clash, *The Future is Unwritten*, Joe says, "That's what was good about Punk: if you were ugly, you were in" (Temple 2007, 35:00). Joe's comment highlights an anti-fashion for *punk*'s sake. The Clash claimed *punk* membership through their manipulation of mainstream fashion, sloganeering and collage of counter-cultural styles.

According to The Clash's biographer, Pat Gilbert, Paul Simonon played a major role in influencing the band's fashion in addition to playing the bass guitar:

> Simonon was called 'the James Dean of Punk,' but he was much more its Stuart Sutcliffe. What he brought to the band, initially at least, had little to do with musicianship and everything to do with image, poise and attitude. As with the tragic Hamburg Beatle, his bass-playing skills paled against his cinematic, *nouvelle vague* good looks and an interest in evolving new visual styles for the group - the Rauschenberg paint-splattered shirts, the Hollywood cowboy gear, the punked-up US Marine fatigues. It was Paul's presence that ensured The Clash's iconic status and gave them a subcultural edge. (2004, 49)

Through a process of *bricolage* , Simonon cross-referenced counter-cultural styles, a process of intertextuality, which symbolized an existing anti-establishment sentiment, claiming them as representative of the band and *punk*. The Clash's early image was constructed to convey anarchistic attitude, much like the abstract expressionist artist, Rauschenberg. They splattered paint on slogans so as to actively distort what was perceived as mainstream coherence. According to Gilbert, the band would engage its audience with antagonistic slogans spray-painted on clothes, such as "Hate & War," the negative to the previous generations' "Love & Peace" (Gilbert 2004, 126). Slogans operated to distinguish *punk* as a unique subculture. The Clash's later image borrowed

from spaghetti Westerns[15] and military uniforms as they were perceived to convey an impish toughness and machismo, supporting an anarchistic ideology. *Punk* style was perceived as social commentary, an aesthetic that reflected a symbiotic relationship to popular culture.

The video performances that I analyzed, reveal claims to *punk* membership by The Clash. For instance, the version of The Clash's, "White Riot," performed at the Rock Against Racism and Anti-Nazi League concert in Victoria Park London (30 April, 1978), contains intertextual references, which combine to convey authentic *punk*. In this performance, The Clash are joined on stage by the lead singer of *punk* group, Sham 69, who is dressed like the band in tight zippered black pants and boldly coloured shirt. Strummer is wearing a red shirt with 'RAF'[16] and 'Brigate Rosse'[17] custom stenciled on the front. It refers to the abduction of former Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, by the Red Brigade in Rome. While it suggests that Joe supports this act of terrorism, he explains to biographer, Pat Gilbert, that his intention was to embody antagonism: "I didn't think they were getting the press coverage they deserve" (2004, 190). The context

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[15] Spaghetti Westerns are comparable to American Western films, both in terms of production and story line, but are typically shot in Italy, and produced by primarily Italian actors. Perhaps the most famous, were those that starred Clint Eastwood, such as *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). In terms of bricolage, spaghetti Westerns are constructed much like *punk*: meanings, which are associated with Westerns are appropriated in order to serve production goals. In this case, The Clash use these meanings to their own ends.

[16] Red Army Faction, militaristically displays The Clash's socialist leanings and political dissention as a *punk* membership claim.

[17] In 1978, the Red Brigades, a leftist terrorist group, kidnapped and later killed the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in protest of a potential alliance between Moro's Christian Democrat Party and the Italian Communist Party. Joe's intention behind wearing 'Brigate Rosse' was not to promote the act of murder, but to expose violence in politics and to actively oppose it. In this case, Joe's shirt intertextually leant his performance an additional layer of urgency.

of performance, combined with Joe's explanation reveals multiple layers of authenticity related claims, or the intertextuality of The Clash's claim to *punk* authenticity. First, the musicians' fashion conveys ideals of *punk*, functioning both to define the band as separate from the mainstream, and as members in *punk* culture. Second, the reference to injustices in Italy lends a certain political value to The Clash, as though they are purveyors of critical awareness. The combination of symbolisms supports the band's political ideology. According to Gilbert, the concert was set up to raise awareness about growing fascist and racist attitudes in England (2004, 188, 364). Third, the song structure follows a common *punk* formula: instrumental introduction, chorus ("White riot, I want a riot, white riot, a riot of my own"), verse one, pre-chorus and chorus, verse two, short guitar solo and chorus finale. Compared to 1970s Western popular music, "White Riot" is unsophisticated, raucous and grating, far from pacific. The reaction of 70,000 fans in Victoria Park is intense, marked by swaying crowds, jumping and fist pumping, suggesting that *punk* membership has all but crystallized by this point. The combination of The Clash's performance style, underpinned by political attitude and cross referenced through their use of fashion, suggests an intertextual construction of meanings or discourses of authentic *punk*.

Fans' responses to performances such as White Riot in Victoria Park, were found to authenticate The Clash and *punk* cultural values. For instance, the following posted comments reveal the character-based difference between 'doing punk' and 'being punk' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1991):

> I was there that day and you're right, it was one of the greatest moments in Rock history- The Clash at Victoria Park for Rock Against Racism - they blew away all the cobwebs - I was one of the guys with long hair funnily enough and I kept my

long hair all through the punk years and used to go into Barbs [a club] in Birmingham with my work suit on cos I worked in an office and to me that was being punk too - just me with no poncy bullshit or hairspray - it was all about the music. (comment 110, "The Clash - White Riot Live," youtube.com 2011)

This comment exemplifies authentication of The Clash and *punk*, not only as style, but also as an attitude. He notes that although he did not wear his hair short like other *punk* fans, he took the *punk* attitude everywhere he went, thus uncompromisingly claiming membership based on 'being' not just 'doing punk.' He continues:

A lot of the characters with the hairdos became Duran fans a coupla years later. They were missing the point somewhat. I really love seeing comments about "Then and Now" as though you could have today's music without yesterday's [music]. The thing is to keep creating and refer back without comparing. You cannot BE The Clash and it is easy to copy them. If you want a challenge, try and create an effect that mirrors that [effect] achieved by The Clash - that'd be worth doing (rather than debating it). (comment 111, "The Clash - White Riot Live", youtube.com 2011)

This fan continues to make claims based on *punk* attitude. His critique suggests that *punk* membership is not only signified through style, but through character, as represented by The Clash. Those who became fans of *new wave* bands, such as Duran Duran, were critiqued as fashion fiends, and compromised their membership to *punk* culture.

4.2 Authenticity through Endorsement: *Torch Passing*

Perhaps the most obvious indication of the construction of authenticity is through endorsement, or torch passing. Several examples were found throughout the data where The Clash claimed *punk* membership through the endorsement of other bands and artists. For instance, on 23 October 1976, at one of The Clash's first headlining concerts, Patti Smith jumped on stage to signal her endorsement (Gilbert 2004, 114). By this point in her career, Smith was at the leading edge of the New York *punk* and *new wave* scene. Her

endorsement of The Clash operated to expose the band to processes of authentication that

she received from her fans, and to draw them into an established genre.

The Clash used the endorsement of the producers they worked with. For instance,

after achieving success, they decided to approach one of their heroes of *reggae* to

produce their next single: Lee Perry. Their sound technician recalls their meeting:

> The Clash were brilliant. They were genuinely excited. Lee Perry couldn't believe
> that these white guys were singing about reggae and writing songs on the same
> kind of topics, the political stuff. That crossover, he couldn't believe it, he thought
> it was amazing. He said he'd talked to Bob Marley about it, and Bob was writing
> a song with our name in it. Bob Marley was writing a song about The Clash!
> ('Punky Reggae Party' was released as the B-side of 'Jammin' in December
> 1977.) We asked Lee Perry to work with us on a couple of tracks and he said,
> 'Yeah, great.' (Gilbert 2004, 159)

This discourse reveals authenticity through endorsement. Lee Perry's established

reputation as a leading *reggae* producer leant The Clash credibility, allowing them to

write and perform *reggae*-influenced songs that might otherwise be deemed musically,

thus culturally exploitive. It allowed the band a direct cross-cultural connection, more

valuable to both *punk* and *reggae* fans, than had they simply imitated the *reggae*

aesthetic. For instance, according to Gilbert, *rock* musicians such as Eric Clapton and

Paul McCartney were criticized for writing stylistically *reggae* songs without the political

endorsement of established *reggae* artists, such as Lee Perry and Bob Marley (2004,

134). According to the above quote, Marley also endorsed The Clash. The band manager,

Rhodes, would later send Mick and Joe to Jamaica to write music as though their direct

experience of Jamaican culture worked to endorse the band: "This way they could learn

what reggae and poverty were really about" (Gilbert 2004, 165). The closer the band got

to the original, the greater the legitimacy of their claim to authenticity. Endorsement empowered The Clash to take a political stand against racism in their music.

The Clash gained credibility from artists and bands with whom they shared the stage. For instance, in January, 1979, in support of their second album *Give 'em Enough Rope* (1978), the band toured America, beginning in Vancouver and running down the West coast before heading East. On this tour they began a tradition of hiring opening acts with a reputation of being anti-establishment, and with a developed fan base. Their first opener was Bo Diddley, one of Joe's heroes while growing up, who was paid more than The Clash to open for the band on this tour. According to Gilbert, "The idea was to highlight the link between The Clash's *R&B-reggae punk* and its black American heritage. The group loved Bo and he loved them back" (2004, 221). Having Bo on stage symbolized a link with his status as an outsider in the *R&B* tradition. Despite their musical differences, The Clash's outsider and underdog identity in America was endorsed by Bo's opening performances and attracted positive fan reception.

In the early part of their career, The Clash benefited from the endorsement of established artists, however, as they received critical success and their fans grew in number, The Clash became the endorser. According to Gilbert, established *soul* rebels like Bo were replaced by up and coming *hip-hop* acts like Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five (2004, 296). This reveals an important shift in the process of authentication; endorsement tends to establish a band's claim to authenticity in an elite class of performers. This elite class is distinctive because of innovative characteristics relative to their respective genres. In this case, The Clash claims innovative-originality by combining the rawness of *punk* with the aesthetic and political fervour of *reggae.*

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Innovative status sets the band apart from their peers and on par with historically

transcendent innovators like Patti Smith, Bo Diddley and Bob Marley. From this position,

bands like The Clash can become endorsers by virtue of being endorsed, and thereby

benefit from the exposure that comes from endorsing up and coming bands.[18]

The Clash has gained credibility from the awards they have won. Despite their

anti-establishment beliefs, or perhaps because of them, the band has received recognition

and endorsement from a variety of magazines, associations and institutions. These

include an Ivor Novello songwriting award (2000), a *MOJO* Inspiration award,

symbolically presented by Roger Daltry of The Who (2004), and induction into The Rock

and Roll Hall of Fame, symbolically presented by the Edge of U2[19] (2003) (Gilbert 2004,

363). Like cultural gatekeepers, museums and awards operate to objectify bands,

discursively constructing them as though representative of a particular music culture.

Museums present bands' performances and lyrics as homologically representative of

cultures and thus encapsulate them for their idealized cultural value. Awards given to The

Clash, and the ways in which they are presented in museums, discursively enshrines the

band and the *punk* culture values that they claimed to represent.

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[18] Status-based authenticity is discussed further in section 4.4.

[19] Awards endow artists with prestige. The 'Ivors' is the only award which is not
influenced by major record labels or publishers, but rather, is chosen by a writer's
community and given to British performers. Roger Daltry is the lead singer of The Who,
a 1960s-70s counter-cultural band that inspired The Clash, and the Edge is largely
considered an innovative electric guitar player in *punk* influenced, *post-punk* band, U2.
The status of both Daltry and the Edge functions to endorse The Clash in addition to the
endowment which comes by way of the awards ceremony.

4.3 Authenticity to Constructed Self: *Identity*

The construction of notions of authenticity through visual and self-narrative means was found throughout the data, particularly in the retrospective accounts of The Clash's rise to success. In order to gain authentication, the band constructed their self-identity to fit with *punk* culture. For instance, a set of narratives around The Clash's lead singer, Joe Strummer, reveals a deliberate separation between life before and after joining the band. In 1976, Strummer's middle class upbringing, and his involvement with cabaret style *pub rock* band, The 101'ers would have been perceived by his predominantly working class *punk* fans as privileged, and would therefore have compromised his claim to *punk* membership. Biographer, Pat Gilbert states:

> The next few weeks saw modifications in Strummer's outward bearing: his voice became a slurred Cockney grunt and his demeanor grew rougher. His characteristic gentleness was buried deep in a subcutaneous layer… It was as if he was finally joining the outlaw gang of his teenage fantasies - and he was the enigmatic poet, like a punked-up version of Dylan's Alias character in Pekinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. (2004, 92)

Strummer's self-construction includes several intertextual references to working class life, such as a Cockney accent, associated with an underprivileged culture, and rough demeanor. In order to gain *punk* authentication, Strummer dissociated from middle class *blasé* independence and took on an interdependent gang-like approach to performance. The tough working class character signified a background that was common to *punk* fans. Embodying these traits attracted fan authentication, and informed the band's social and political convictions such as equal opportunity and anti-racism. According to Tony James of Generation X, "Street credibility wasn't an issue before punk. Rock 'n 'roll was always a way out for working-class kids, but it wasn't their exclusive domain" (Gilbert

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2004, 90). *Punk* fans demanded consistency between performer and political conviction, leading bands to emphasize personal authenticity and anti-commerciality.

Joe Strummer claimed membership by embodying antagonism, which affected the connection with his audience. Biographer, Gilbert gives an account of this approach from the band's road manager, Johnny Green: "[Strummer] wanted to challenge people, he wanted to force people to think. He wasn't scared of getting people to confront [racism], however uncomfortable it would make them feel. He wanted people to work it out for themselves" (Gilbert 2004, 136). This test-based discourse reveals Strummer's claim to *punk* through the embodiment of seriousness and DIY, and through the promotion of anti-racist attitude. It suggests personal authenticity.

The Clash's fans endorsed personal authenticity when interpreted as authentic *punk*, inferring values such as integrity, anti-commercialism, anarchy or DIY. Bono exemplifies fan endorsement here:

> There was a moment when the world stopped - when everything stopped: 1976, 1977. Suddenly, ideas became more important than guitar solos, and a certain integrity became more important than driving a Rolls Royce into a swimming pool. Rock stars were like Greek gods: you were lucky to be in the room with them. All that came to an end with The Clash. There was a feeling that 'if The Clash could do it, you could do it.' (Temple 2007, 43:00)

In this quote Bono discursively alludes to *punk* values such as anti-commercialism and DIY. Contrasted with corporate *rockers*, he constructs The Clash as though authentic *punk*.

The Clash's claims to *punk* membership were frequently threatened by their commercial success. In order to defend their status, band members would articulate their beliefs in ways which were consistent with *punk* values. For example, in the

documentary, *The Future is Unwritten* (2005), Strummer claims that The Clash's 1982

stadium performances did in fact compromise their *punk* membership because it hindered

their connection with their fans. Joe states:

> Standing there singing those songs while it got bigger and bigger towards the end,
> for some reason, I began to feel worse and worse. It's something to do with what
> those songs are saying. When we were part of the audience, we were part of a
> movement. Once it became thousands of miles removed from that, I began to
> freak out. (Temple 2007, 75:25)

Like in a confessional, Joe acknowledges that his actions compromised *punk* values.

However in doing so, he maintains his claim to *punk* membership and bolsters his

individual integrity by revealing his ethic. Interestingly, this quote follows The Clash's

break up and their 2003 induction into the rock and roll hall of fame, and suggests that

they might have enjoyed a longer career had they maintained a schedule of playing

smaller sized venues. At this point in their career, Strummer's underlying suggestion is

speculative, and operates to support the canonization of The Clash.

Gatekeeper accounts serve to either legitimize or challenge identity claims,

however they are often inconsistent in their analysis. For instance, biographer Pat Gilbert

traces the early construction of The Clash's identity to interviews with *punk* magazines

such as *Sniffin' Glue* (Gilbert 2004, 111-13). The Clash's first interview with the

magazine underlined their presumptuous idealism: [20] the press was misinforming a public

too naïve to notice; pop bands were deemed irrelevant in that they distracted their

audiences from 'real' issues; and the situation was too serious for The Clash to take

lightly. Despite this construction however, journalist Mark Perry admits to skepticism:

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[20] This interview is discussed in the 'Membership: *Anti-establishment attitude*' section
above.

I was real working class. Deptford was one of the severest places in London, well known for being hard. So I had the credentials. I mean, you look at people and you know whether they're hard or not. People like Mick [(Clash guitarist)], they're not hard, which is OK, but when they're trying to put on this front it was like nonsense. But then, at the same time, you didn't want to blow it for them. It wasn't like you were the *Sun* or something. I was never of that mindset, 'Oh, lets reveal the truth!' We were part of it, we wanted to encourage it, we didn't want to blow it out of the water. I was there to build it up. *Sniffin' Glue* was very critical but I still wanted to be a supporter of what I felt punk was all about. The Clash, they're our band, the last thing I wanted was to pull holes. (Gilbert 2004, 112)

Primarily, the published *Sniffin' Glue* interview operates to legitimatize The Clash, disseminating their narratives to the magazine's readership. However Perry's discourse reveals his perception of the band's conscious construction of identity, and his active support. Here, class-based values, such as Perry's personal background in Deptford, are displaced by *punk* related values. Despite 'knowing' that their claims were inconsistent with their background, Perry condoned the politics of *punk* and therefore justified his promotion of the band. The claims that Perry legitimizes as reflective of *punk* culture overshadow The Clash's class based in-authenticity.

The role of the music industry in funding and distributing music is a key influence upon identity-related authenticity work (Peterson 1997).[21] The Clash's manager, Bernie Rhodes, who is referred to in this chapter's opening quotation, played a crucial role in establishing the band's membership in *punk*, and in mediating the influence of the music industry. For instance, his suggestion to Strummer about songwriting would help them claim *punk* membership: "write about what affects you"

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[21] To fans, the production and distribution of music may seem naturally occurring or mundane, however, it can be highly manipulative and overtly commercial (Becker 1982). In order to meet distribution goals, major labels coordinate and organize numerous actors, such as lawyers, agents, managers and producers, and works to promote bands across international boundaries. This includes funding recordings, international distribution and the promotion of live performance.

(Temple 2007, 35:30). The consequence was enormous for The Clash's career as it caused them to focus on issues that they perceived to be relevant to the London scene, and which were informed by personal experience. Fans perceived these issues as relevant and serious, and inferred a degree of personal authenticity. This resonated with *punk* fans and gatekeepers, supporting the circuit of authentication. Fans' subsequent demand for recorded music attracted the support of the music industry.

4.4 Authenticity through Status Identity

Several examples discussed above reveal The Clash's membership in *punk* culture through their status as outside of the mainstream. This includes the band's ability to manipulate mainstream style in innovative ways so as to distinguish *punk* culture from the status quo. For example, Simonen's counter-cultural references, such as Rauschenberg's art, western wear and US-marine gear, work to assert distinction in addition to claiming *punk* membership. Similarly, The Clash's musical style works to distinguish the group from *pop* and corporate *rock*. The band deliberately presented a raw, unsophisticated aesthetic so as to appear transparent and accountable to their fans, compared to *pop*, which was perceived as politically irrelevant, commercially driven, and over-produced. Musical elements typically associated with *pop* music such as carefully scripted guitar solos and coherent melodic vocal lines were manipulated to represent spontaneous, taunting-like, or drab passages.

The Clash introduced elements of *reggae* music and culture into their performances, which worked to create distinction. Militaristic lyrics were associated with the experiences of immigration and race politics. Roland Gift, a musician contemporary to The Clash says, "When Punk first started, it didn't seem particularly black friendly.

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And so when the Clash's first album came out, and they got "Police and Thieves" on it, and they got "Scene From the Carnival" it sort of made Punk accessible to me. Kind of like it was a way of saying, you know, 'this is for you as well'" (Temple 2007, 51:20). Gift's narrative suggests that The Clash gained the support of cultures which were marginalized by the mainstream, including youth, the gender androgynous, and racial minorities in mid-1970s London. Documentarian, Juien Temple, legitimatizes The Clash's 'outsider' status through this interview with Gift. Similarly, The Clash's video director, Don Letts says, "White music has always taken from black music. The difference was, with people like The Clash was, Strummer and Jones were inspired by people who were living next door. So that the effect was more direct" (Temple 2007, 51:46). Letts' statement suggests that The Clash gained status through their direct experience of local politics. This narrative legitimatizes the band based on their experience of youth degradation and race politics in mid-1970s London. This gives The Clash credibility and bolsters their critique of mainstream culture.

The Clash's status was informed both by musical innovation and their critical perspective. While established rock stars like Eric Clapton and Paul McCartney had used the *reggae* aesthetic in some of their recordings in the 1970s, The Clash was distinct in that they incorporated its politics as well. According to journalist, Caroline Coon, before *punk*, "reggae carried the torch of protest that white rock music had had in the late 1960s but then lost" (Gilbert 2004, 135). This quote suggests that *rock*'s critical perspective was distorted and lost due to forces of commercialism, and distancing from both political issues and fans. It suggests that The Clash's political relevance and their approach to connecting with their fans, distinguished them from the mainstream, thus critically and

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legitimately outside of mainstream culture. Coon's narrative suggests that corporate *rock*

had become irrelevant as it was commercialized, and that The Clash legitimately claimed

rock's former status.

The Clash's status is inconsistently authenticated as an indicator of authentic

punk. For instance, The Clash's performance of "Rock the Casbah" at the 1983 Us

Festival in Hollywood is qualitatively debated, revealing differences in the value of

status-based notions of authenticity ("The Clash-Rock the Casbah," youtube.com 2011).

The following is a conversation between fans who viewed the festival performance on-

line:

> FunkKing: Oh MAN this is nasty, those chorus chords are BAD!
> Geffles: They didn't play the wrong chords; they wrote the song they can play it
> however they [expletive] want!
> FunkKing: Okay, well I suppose you're right, but the chords are different at the
> chorus than they are on the original recording. And they sound nasty.
> So I would define that as being the wrong chords. But your interpretation is up to
> you. I hate this version so much, lol.
> Geffles: they're supposed to be a punk band - they sound more punk here than in
> the prissy commercialized "original recording" do you really think they had a
> keyboard in the original song when they have no keyboard player [live]?
> (comments: 7, 10-12, "RocktheCasbah," youtube.com 2011)

In this discourse, fans construct the idea that The Clash is authentic *punk* based on a

particular aesthetic 'correctness' which they perceive in a video recorded performance.

On one hand, fans perceive authentic *punk* musical style, while on the other, fans

perceive innovation, and interpret it as though an indication of status-based authenticity,

outside the popular music norm. In the first comment, FunkKing suggests that this live

performance of "Rock the Casbah" is subpar when compared to the recorded album

version, a critique that Geffles interprets as an attack on the band's *punkness*. According

to Geffles, this performance is true to his conception of *punk* and therefore authentic. His

perception of anarchistic attitude and aesthetic 'imperfections' denotes integrity of

performance, and supports the process of authentication. Compared to the studio recorded

version, in which Geffles perceives aesthetic differences related to over-production, and

thus commercialism, The Clash's live performance of "Rock the Casbah" is

uncompromisingly *punk*. The debate continues:

> FunkKing: For you to imply that the Clash are just a punk band, and that they
> don't know the difference between major and minor chords, tells me all I need to
> know about you. It's been fun. Goodbye.
> Geffles: You don't know shit about punk do you. Go back to orchestra 101
> udreksuh: You don't know shit about the Clash! They combined elements of
> classic rock, ska, reggae, punk and even country like no other band at the time.
> Their recordings were precise and sometimes featured very sophisticated
> progressions and percussion.
> (comments: 15-17, "RocktheCasbah," youtube.com 2011)

This final section reveals a site of authenticity work where grounds for status-based

authenticity and *punk* membership are debated. In the first comment, FunkKing suggests

that The Clash are competent musicians, a skill that allows them to claim membership in

punk, but which also lends them status as innovative performers. In the second comment,

Geffles continues to perceive FunkKing's argument as an attack on The Clash's

punkness, as though status was inconsequential to The Clash's authenticity. In the third

comment, Udreksuh's argument suggests that The Clash's status is bolstered by their

innovative use of musical styles, such as *ska*, *rock*, and *country*. He/she does not interpret

this as though a threat to their being 'real' *punk*, rather, as indicative of their elite status

among innovative pop bands. Interestingly, this debate reveals differences in the process

of authentication in which musical style is perceived either as indicative of membership,

or innovation.

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4.5 Seeking Authentic Experience

From small pubs to stadiums, the place-based experience of The Clash affected

authentication and legitimatization. The experience of live performance included a

reflexive component. The Clash's direct connection with their fans allowed them to

adjust their presentation to attract authentication. For instance, according to Gilbert,

"Joe's combative rhetoric was creating a stink and forcing people to think. This was the

beginning of Joe's emergence as a 'politician.' As politicians do, he was forcing himself

into believing his own rhetoric" (2004, 127). Gilbert's quote reveals the effect of the

circuit of authentication early in The Clash's career. Fans' reactions to performances

were noted by the band and their managers, like a feedback loop. Significantly, the

reflexive process between band and audience suggests that authenticity work is constant.

Close proximity of the band to fans helps to improve bands' connection with fans and in

galvanizing political values such as anarchy. Gilbert describes a typical point of

connection between The Clash and their fans following a performance:

> As with previous Clash tours, there was an open-door policy at the end of each
> night. The group reciprocated the unswerving, intense loyalty of their fans by
> making themselves available for chats and signing records and posters. Joe, as
> anyone who ever met him will testify, was genuinely interested in the experiences
> of fans from Blackburn, Cardiff, Southampton, Aberdeen, Leicester, Portsmouth.
> He'd talk for hours, zoning in on people and making them feel as if they were the
> most important person in the room…Mick was happy to talk music or politics; so
> were Paul and Topper. (2004, 201)

Gilbert's account suggests a transparency or accountability in performance that boosts the

band's credibility and transcends the influence of commercialism. To their fans, a

commercial free experience indicates high levels of subjective authenticity and a stronger

claim to *punk* membership. How the band negotiates and fans receive commercial

success, however, reveals the value of experience and its compromise. As The Clash took a 'genuine' interest in their fans, whether true or false, they invited an exchange of personal convictions. The experience of connecting with The Clash in concert and afterward, invited authentication and worked to define what was called *punk*, including values, style, fashion and political conviction.

The unique experience of The Clash in concert was achieved early on in their pub tours. The sounds of brash guitars, *reggae* infused rhythms and Joe's antagonism, mixed in with casual violence, was perceived as invigorating to their fans. For instance, Gilbert gives an account of an early show as described by a member of the band's entourage, Jon Savage: "The kids were going mental like they do in Manchester and ripping this theatre up. It was just wild and I was in the press pit dodging all these chairs. It was fantastic…[Clash guitarist] Mick Jones caught my eye and went, 'What's going on? This is madness. Have we done this?'" (Gilbert 2004, 163). Savage's quote operates to legitimatize The Clash and their live performance as an authentic *punk* experience. In this case, fans' violence is perceived as empowered and spontaneous, inspired by The Clash. It suggests that *punk* fans actively constructed the authentic concert experience with the performer. The fan's indelible participation is perceived to be larger than their individuality, projected as a cultural movement, and not merely entertainment. Interpreting experience as participatory operated to level the hierarchy between band and fan, and attracted fan authentication of the band.

As The Clash's fans grew in number, so did the demand for larger performance venues. However, changing venue size meant altering the atmosphere that was unique to pubs, and threatened to compromise the connection between band and fan. On The

Clash's 1981-82 tours, manager Bernie Rhodes would attempt to preserve this connection

by refusing to book larger than medium sized venues. According to Gilbert's account, it

was important to conjure an atmosphere:

> Bond's International Casino had been picked to host eight performances by The
> Clash from 28 May to 3 June [1981]. The venue was scouted by Bernie and
> Kosmo.... It was a cavernous sometime disco on the neon sleaze-fringe of Times
> Square [New York City]. With a capacity of around 4,000, it seemed a perfect
> Clash venue: comparatively intimate but with character. Local promoters,
> however, didn't understand why The Clash didn't just play a couple of nights at
> Madison Square Garden like everyone else. (Gilbert 2004, 295)

Gilbert's account reveals a site where authentic experience was created. The Clash used

Bond's Casino in New York City as it avoided distractions which might otherwise be

encountered at a stadium concert in the greater distance between band and fan.[22] The

medium sized venue enabled greater emotional connection than fans might otherwise

experience in the nosebleed section at MSG.[23] Gilbert's account of the gritty

neighbourhood in which Bond's was located, extends the experience of The Clash

beyond the walls of the concert venue, and suggests that experience is stylized so as to

claim 'street cred' and promote an authentic experience.

Experience-based authenticity provides common ground between fans and The

Clash. For instance, Joe's street credibility was supported by his habit of living in vacated

and often condemned houses. Squatting gave Strummer an experience to which *punk* fans

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[22] The Clash's 1982 stadium performances, in which they opened for The Who, is
discussed for ideological implications in section 4.1.2, on *Punk* attitude. Following the
concept of authentic experience, The Clash's conflicted impression of stadium concerts
may also be due to the diminished connection with fans compared with their smaller
venue performances. Stadium concerts compromise both the *punk* ethic of anti-
commerciality, and the connection between band and fan.

[23] Madison Square Garden is an arena located in New York City that has the capacity to
host up to 20000 concert fans. It is home to the national hockey league team, The
Rangers, and national basketball association team, The Knicks.

could relate. Also, the Clash's street politics were bolstered by the affordability,

functionality and toughness of their first practice space. Located in Camden Town,

northwest London, the warehouse had fallen into decay after its vacancy in the 1960s.

The Clash's biographer, Gilbert describes the location below:

> Rehearsal Rehearsals, as it was dubbed, had a grim and brutal resonance that
> suited the band's tough, history-less, no-frills approach. Bernie drummed into
> them: this is new, this is different, this is important. Rehearsals' bare walls looked
> like a set from a Maxim Gorky drama or *The Insect Play*.[24] Only this time Joe's
> performance of Head Ant was for real. Over the next few weeks, Rhodes applied
> his barbed, cajoling sophistry to creating an atmosphere that had an edge and
> promoted an electric sense of intent. (Gilbert 2004, 89)

This discursive account works to suggest authenticity. The band's rehearsal space works

to legitimatize The Clash's claim to *punk* membership, as anti-commercial, DIY and

authentic to self. The band's rehearsal experience, like their location relative to the race

riots, suggests street credibility. Gilbert's account reveals the influence of manager,

Bernie Rhodes as an active pursuant of authentic experience, and suggests that he used

experience to construct the band's identity as *punk*.[25]

4.6 Concluding Remarks

The Clash's claim to *punk* membership involves a careful construction of indicators

relating to the values, anti-commercialism, DIY, anti-establishment, and anarchy. In each

case, presentation operates to distinguish the band from mainstream culture, while

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[24] Gilbert references Gorky's dramas and Karel Capek's *Pictures of an Insect's Life*
(1921) in which characters satirically work out ethical concerns around the rise of social-
political forces in late-Tsarist Russia, and early Nazi Germany. Here, The Clash's band
members are presented as personalities in a real life drama on the verge of cultural
revolution.
[25] The black and white photo of the band on the cover of their debut album, "The Clash"
(1977) was taken on a ramp just outside Rehearsal Rehearsals. It conveys a gritty image
of the band, like a street gang, and operates to attract *punk* fans.

increasing the potential for both fan support and legitimatization from gatekeepers. The interpretation of 'real' *punkness* is found to vary with the transition from their early to late career. Unlike corporate *rock* in the era before, *punk* is characterized by a degree of individual authenticity, which increases the connection between bands and fans who share this concept of an authentic self. Torch-passing, reveals a process whereby credibility is passed from authenticated bands and artists to other bands, such as The Clash. It benefits bands in their early career as they make claims to subcultural membership and seek their fans' support. An elite collection of bands was found to exemplify their respective genres, in both style and politic, yet distinguished by innovation and originality. This group of artists subsequently benefitted from endorsing up and coming bands, and from the institutional endorsement of museums and award agencies. Authenticity to the constructed self-identity reveals a process whereby a band's claim to membership is framed through visual and narrative means, and which works to attract legitimatization and authentication. Although The Clash consistently worked throughout their career in order to construct their identity as a consistent reflection of their character, it was their fans that ultimately completed the circuit of authentication. Gatekeepers work to legitimatize through canonization, even after the band's active years of performance. The Clash attracted authentication through their innovative, yet deliberated use of fashion and musical styles, and by their critical perspective on mainstream culture. Sites of authenticity work reveal the ways in which the band's status was perceived relative to a parent culture and as distinct from pop or corporate *rock*. Status based authenticity allows fans to authenticate bands despite contradictory interpretations of performance. However, the subjective evaluation of status is fickle, and

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fails to consistently indicate consensus among fans. The pursuit of authentic experience

constitutes a site where *punk* values can be represented in performance, and where

membership can be claimed. Live performance functions as a site where the band can

react to their fans' engagement, or lack thereof, in order to attract authentication. The

Clash's deliberate use of small to mid-sized venues for extended periods, closes the gap

between the band and its audience. Finally, historical accounts of The Clash's rehearsal

space, including the involvement of their manager, suggests that place is related to

credibility, which works to attract authentication, and construct a notion of authentic

punk.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Indie and Arcade Fire*

"The difference between us and Nirvana is that we've never had a big radio hit. So the people who turn up to our shows, they're not waiting for that one big song. They're buying into the whole experience, and that's enormously gratifying."
                                    - WIN BUTLER, "An Audience With… Arcade Fire" (2011)

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, *indie* music culture is explored through an investigation of the band, Arcade Fire, as it claims membership to an *indie* subculture, cultural gatekeepers as they work to legitimatize, and fans as they endorse the band, forming a circuit of authentication. Three key characteristics define *indie* music: anti-commercialism, specifically opposition to music production for capitalistic wealth-accumulation, DIY or autonomous attitude, and an ethic which is influenced by communal experience, such as online fan communities and in style or type of concert experience. *Indie* stands for independence from the status quo or mainstream (Maddux 2010; Hibbett 2005). This makeup stresses autonomy: an independence from, rather than an alternative to mainstream marketing, guided by a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic (Newman 2009). Furthermore, autonomy is an important aspect of individual self-realization, framed against a backdrop of mainstream commerciality, and emphasizes notions of personal authenticity. The widespread success of *indie* music, and other art forms, has established *indie* as an aesthetic, a means of both social and musical differentiation (Hibbett 2005). Arcade Fire is an exemplar of this positioning and musical aesthetic. As in the previous chapter, Peterson's model will be used to identify sites of authenticity work, where Arcade Fire makes claims to *indie* membership and discourses of authentic *indie* are constituted.

5.1.1 Authenticity through Cultural Identity/Membership: *Anti-Commercialism*

Discourse around *indie* membership typically positions bands against the commerciality

of mainstream culture, which is marked by an idealism of authenticity to self (Newman

2009; Maddux 2010; Goffman 1959). In his article, "What is Indie Rock?" Ryan Hibbett

provides a description of *indie* culture and its predisposition to what is conceived of as

mainstream:

> Cultural capital can cease to have value as it becomes increasingly accessible. For
> this reason, lest it be diffused into the mainstream, indie rock must perpetually
> seek out new artists, records, and sounds: toward the old ends of social distinction
> new currencies must be forged. For indie rock enthusiasts, this means a
> continuing effort to keep abreast of current developments, to remain one step
> ahead of what others are listening to or talking about. For artists, this means
> coping with a fickle audience whose values are often at odds with their own
> artistic and economic goals; while most artists hope to reach a larger audience and
> generate more profit, their listeners are poised to attack or abandon at the slightest
> detection of 'selling out' - a phrase pivotal to preserving the myth of authenticity,
> which it defines in opposition to the commercially influenced. The lifespan for
> indie authenticity can be brutally short. (2005, 64)

The posture of *indie* relative to mainstream culture is its defining feature and ethic.

Hibbett suggests that *indie* gains cultural capital, or symbolic power, from its pursuit of

commercial free relations, and dissociation from economic capital or wealth

accumulation (Bourdieu 1984). In contrast, the *indie* ethic argues that mass production

removes value associated with originality or uniqueness, or cultural capital, and therefore

becomes meaningless to consumers. 'Selling out' involves a process whereby

membership is lost to the manipulative influences of commercialism. Although *indie* and

punk share DIY attitude and stance of anti-commercialism, *indie* is uniquely

characterized by themes of *blasé* autonomy, giving the appearance of collectivity and the

mimesis of independence (Baudrillard 1994; Newman 2009). The pursuit of the *indie*

ethic was found throughout the data as Arcade Fire made claims to *indie* membership.

        Collective membership in *indie* culture does not appear as homogeneous nor as

strong as in *punk*. This is due to *indie*'s seemingly unlimited range of lifestyle options to

which DIY and corporate skepticism can be applied. The contradiction in *indie* culture is

in its symbiotic relationship with the mainstream: without an overtly corporate status quo,

indie cannot claim 'otherness.'[26] Yet, the recent growth of *indie* culture (Newman 2009)

suggests that its corporate skepticism is shifting on two counts: first, *indie* is susceptible

to commoditization by the culture industry[27] which has successfully marketed *indie* to a

broader consumer base; second, its members endorse mainstream distribution as a means

of spreading *indie* values (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Increasingly, *indie* uses traditional

corporate structuring in order to promote ideals such as 'genuineness' and personal

authenticity, justified as merely a means to reaching a wider audience.

5.1.2 Membership: *DIY/Autonomy*

Arcade Fire was well received before signing to *indie* label, Merge Records (Lewis

2011). Their early 2000s self-booked and managed performances in small venues across

Canada and the US attracted a loyal fan-base and allowed them to strike a recording and

distribution contract with Merge that meshed with their career goals (Frere-Jones 2010).

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[26] Otherness as it relates to status is discussed below in the authenticity through status section. It becomes valuable to *indie* culture when framed as 'true' or 'genuine,' in relation to mainstream, which is framed as 'fake.'

[27] The culture industry is theorized as the totality of culture producers, including literature, music and television, which has the effect of standardizing national sentiment (Adorno 1991, 98-106). In this case it is viewed insidiously as though it replaces the cultural value of social forms, such as music, with commercial value. The culture industry is synonymous with the production of mainstream culture.

Although bands often sign to labels for genre specific support, such as a *soul* band signing to Motown, Arcade Fire signed to Merge so as to maintain their self-constructed aesthetic. Significantly, this deal allows the band to maintain creative control and the freedom to record albums according to their taste preference, with discriminately chosen producers. Creative control introduces the DIY ethic to another realm of music production and increases the legitimacy of the band's claim to *indie* culture membership.

According to the band manager, Scott Rodger, Merge is used for the production, publicity and distribution of albums through band approved digital service providers (DSP) and retail stores connected to networks such as Alternative Distribution Alliance (ADA) (Frere-Jones 2010; mergerecords.com 2011). Actors involved in promoting the band are limited to *indie* distribution networks that screen the appearance of mass production so as to maintain cultural capital. Even though ADA is connected to a network of *indie* music vendors, it is also owned by major label, Warner, and offers the potential for international distribution. Arcade Fire limits the involvement of major labels to the international level, where the band's claim to *indie* membership is least compromised. The band owns the publishing rights to their music, which allows them to maintain control of its use in media, such as advertising. For example, during Super Bowl XLIV, the song "Wake Up" was used to raise support for Haiti earthquake relief work through agency Partners in Health.[28] This rare occasion allowed for widespread distribution in support of humanitarian aid, significant for not being commercially driven.

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[28] Dombal, Ryan. 2010. "Arcade Fire License "Wake Up" to Super Bowl to Benefit Haiti Relief." *pitchfork.com* Accessed 14 July, 2011. http://pitchfork.com/news/37788-arcade-fire-license-wake-up-to-super-bowl-to-benefit-haiti-relief/

Similarly, "Wake Up" was used to promote the Spike Jonze directed *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009). Limiting exposure to sports events and *indie* films suggests that the band is less concerned with commercial gains and expresses their autonomous control, which serves as a claim to authenticity. In an interview with Lauren Laverne, lead singer Win Butler reveals how the band used DIY to achieve success:

> We're really lucky to be able to be doing this. Particularly the amount we get to dictate what we do…I think that we were able to have some success before we signed our soul away. No one can really pretend to take credit for what we did for ourselves. I think a lot of times, labels actually believe they create the artist. (BBC2, 2007)

In this quote, Butler claims membership by stressing the band's early success apart from the music industry. Arcade Fire's creative control is optimized through a lack of major label influence, and vise versa - corporate influence is limited in the band's production. The band's presentation as an entity that is autonomous from corporate influence idealizes a self-directed kind of creativity, and emphasizes their personal convictions. Arcade Fire's *indie* membership is bolstered by Win's comment about the fact that he did not sign to a major label.

Arcade Fire's DIY ethic extends to their presentation, a factor in their early and on-going success. I located several examples of the band's claims to *indie* membership through performance in the data. For example, the band's DIY fashion and swapping instruments in performance symbolize democratic membership, and autonomy from the mainstream. According to journalist Jonah Weiner, "They make their own matching outfits and share musical duties in an idealistic defiance of hierarchy" (2007, 59). Guardian journalist John Harris, on the other hand, cross-references their appearance with an historically specific subculture: "Once I started finding out what the band looked like,

dressed in like, almost like Amish people. Some sort of ascetic self-denying Christian cult y'know. It was all steeped in this sort of American gothic 19th century feeling with this religiosity about it as well" (BBC2 2007, 2:48). This example reveals how the press discursively legitimizes Arcade Fire's style as authentic *indie*, interpreted as unassuming rather than flamboyant, signifying a modesty that is here likened to Amish culture. Arcade Fire's stylistic claim to *indie* membership is dialectical, set apart from the mainstream, but not in anarchistic defiance, rather with evangelistic fervour. Unlike *punk* style, seen as an obnoxious snub at conservative Britain, *indie* is seen to offer a virtuous higher calling.

5.1.3 Membership: *Aesthetic Ethic/Communal Experience*

While *punk's* politic is externally focused on cultural injustices related to the status quo, popular culture such as racism, or social stratification and inequality, *indie* adds a self-reflective dynamic. Discourse around 'real *indie*' is characterized by themes of 'genuineness' or personal authenticity, a site where individuals transcend commerciality through subjective experience. Arcade Fire's aesthetic ethic and the construction of communal experience is revealed in several discourses which are discussed further in the self-construction and authentic experience sections below. For instance, *indie* activism is characterized less by grand overarching politics, rather, it supports individualized agencies such as NGO's, and supports personal integrity rather than revolutionary violence. Nonetheless, it continues a humanistic activism that The Clash were first to support in the popular music realm (Gilbert 2004, 336). Supporting activism operates to distinguish bands such as The Clash and Arcade Fire from the mainstream. For example, Arcade Fire's endorsement of post-earthquake relief in Haiti through Partners in Health

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(PIH) exemplifies *indie* values at work. It suggests that the band supports humanistic

values, which operates to boost their cultural capital[29] and create distinction (Bourdieu

1984).

5.2 Authenticity through Endorsement: *Torch Passing*

Endorsement came early to Arcade Fire and has continued to occur throughout their

career. British musician and innovator David Bowie, famous for developing *glam-rock* in

the early1970s, joined the band live, twice, in fall 2005 (Weiner 2007). Bowie's

performance with the band signaled a torch passing, embedding Arcade Fire in a long

line of innovators in rock history. This lineage includes David Byrne, known for musical

innovation and intellectual depth in the development of *post-punk* and *new wave* with his

late 1970s band, The Talking Heads. Byrne also joined Arcade Fire on-stage and in the

recording of "Speaking in Tongues," a bonus track included in the re-release of *The*

Suburbs Deluxe Edition (2011). These artists' dissociation with the mainstream through

innovation in the 1970s and 80s gained a level of credence as *indie* that was passed on to

Arcade Fire. The authenticity associated with Byrne and Bowie stretched to include the

up and coming band as innovators, independent of the mainstream. The effect of

endorsement on their fans is to regenerate the subcultural posture relative to the

mainstream that *indie* claims. It reveals that *indie's* exclusionary status is not necessarily

new, but part of a social phenomenon that goes back to, and potentially predates the

1970s. The intertextuality of endorsement may in fact reveal a strategy of maintaining

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[29] Cultural capital relates to the unequal distribution of cultural practices and symbolic
power. Bourdieu suggests that the development or accumulation of cultural capital
creates distinction (1984). In this case, the distinction that Arcade Fire gains through
association with PIH, works to attract authentication.

outsider status amongst a select group of elite artists. In an effort to abate the perceived

corruption of commoditization, established artists seek to endorse innovative artists and

in turn receive credit that bolsters their status. Innovation and originality are the key

signifiers that attract endorsement and regenerate posturing relative to the mainstream.

Arcade Fire's claim to indie membership is also strengthened by U2's

endorsement. According to reporter Sean O'Hagan, U2 had invited the band to open for

them on tours, used "Wake Up" as part of their pre-show fanfare, and joined them in live

performance (2010). O'Hagan disseminates the endorsement through his journalism,

regenerating U2's claim to innovation through their connection with Arcade Fire, who

are celebrated for their innovation. U2 emerged as a *post-punk* band from Dublin, Ireland

in 1978, but by 1985 had established themselves not only as social and political

commentators, but as spiritual guides too. With inspiring performances in support of

Amnesty International and at Live Aid in London's Wembley stadium, U2's live shows

became known for evoking ethereal experience and socio-political activism. Like Arcade

Fire, their authenticity was built on an emotionally stimulating musical aesthetic and

humanistic morality, signified through their support for international social justice. Their

fans legitimated the higher purpose that came with this mode of authentic *post-punk*.

U2's Grammy winning Album of the Year, *The Joshua Tree* (1987) set them apart from

the mainstream and landed the band on the cover of Time magazine, at the time, only the

fourth rock band to do so (time.com [1987] 2005).[30] In this article, U2 is lauded for

challenging a deeper, spiritual conviction: "Their concerts are as revivifying as anything

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[30] Cocks, Jay. 1987. "U2: Rock's Hottest Ticket." *Time*. 129:17. time.com Accessed July 14, 2011

in rock, with a strong undertow of something not often found this side of Bruce

Springsteen: moral passion" (time.com [1987] 2005). Time's coverage of the band

symbolizes a broader cultural endorsement than *punk's* fan 'zines like *Sniffin' Glue*

allow; Time legitimates U2's authenticity consisting of wider readership. Similarly,

Arcade Fire celebrates this moral passion, drawing comparisons and endorsement as

spiritual heir apparent to U2. This distinction is not lost on Arcade Fire however, as

Win's brother and fellow band member Will states: "Every so often someone will say

we're the new U2, but we really make some pretty weird music a lot of the time. Sure, we

have some straight-up rockers, but there's a strangeness there too and a musical diversity

that a lot of bands don't have. We're not straightforward" (O'Hagan 2010). While Will

appears to humbly deflect the comparison - and endorsement - he in fact claims

additional *indie* authenticity by way of originality. The originality that Arcade Fire gains

from blending a variety of musical styles sets them apart from their peers and gains the

attention of fans and critics. Originality, combined with endorsement justifies the band's

claim to membership among the *indie* elite.[31]

    Arcade Fire has also benefitted from the endorsement of Bruce Springsteen. As

mentioned in the Time interview above, Springsteen performs with 'moral passion,' a

quality he recognizes in Arcade Fire and elaborates on in a joint interview with Win

Butler:

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[31] Although Adorno was criticized for praising the *avant-garde* as though musically elite
and sole proprietors of critical consciousness, elite is used here to denote a privileged
status in popular culture. In this case, elite bands include U2 and Arcade Fire. As elite
musicians, they represent values which are supported by their respective 'outsider'
culture. Contemporary elite performers operate like Adorno's critically conscious,
however, with a farther reaching music industry and audience than what was available to
artists like Schoenberg in the early 20th century.

> There's a furious aspect to the performance, and that's why people come out -
> you're recognizing the realities of people's emotional lives and their difficulties,
> you're presenting these problems, and you're bringing a survival kit. The bands
> that do that forge intense, intense relationships with their audience, and to me, that
> was always the core of the best rock'n'roll. (Kandell 2007)

Springsteen's discourse emphasizes notions of personal authenticity, referring to the

realm of emotions, reality and struggle. In the 1970s, he reacted to the mainstreaming of

rock much like The Clash, focusing on what he perceived as cultural apathy by

emphasizing authenticity to self, uncorrupted by commercialism. Musically, his aesthetic

was to use organic instruments like saxophone, piano and organ, while appropriating

electric guitars and bass with limited effect driven embellishment. It created the

impression of an organic pragmatism, leaving little to the imagination. Similar to The

Clash, Springsteen's use of intertexual references harkened to the roots of rock so as to

claim an authenticity unaffected by commercialism. Like Arcade Fire, his 'heart and

soul' was laid to bare, not hidden behind sound effects or elaborate presentation.

      Bruce Springsteen and Arcade Fire's authentic ideal is also celebrated by their

fans who combine the symbolism of meaningful values and objects, such as nostaligic

ideals and icons of post-war America, to effect endorsement. One such fan uses Arcade

Fire's blog site to state the following:

> Bruce Springsteen is America. He is the prairies, he is the entire 1950s, he is
> veterans and young punks out to make a name for themselves. He is scuffed black
> leather, the Midwest, he is the smell of a small-town garage and stale coffee in a
> one-horse diner. He is NYC, he is Route 66. Arcade Fire are nameless, timeless,
> placeless and magical. (www.arcadefire.com 2007)

The nostalgic iconography of 1950s America is used to authenticate Bruce Springsteen as

a meaningful musician. The notion of icon refers to the subject matter or meaning of

imagery, here implied by "small-town garage and stale coffee," as opposed to their form

alone (Rose 2007, 150-5). The fan's discourse references traditional values such as a hard

work ethic, freedom and integrity, employed in the small town Midwest to provide

sustenance for health and home. The tangible scale of this imagery is romanticized as

personal, within the realm of everyday life and ordinary experience, not alienated by

automated answering systems or urban sprawl. Alhough their cultural relevance is

generationally separated, Springsteen and Arcade Fire are connected by an underlying

value: personal authenticity. The 'magical' quality of Arcade Fire's music is reminiscent

of Springsteen's and celebrated as a sign of the same struggle for integrity and freedom.

Arcade Fire has not yet come to symbolize comparable imagery, but the foundation is

there. This fan's endorsement serves to legitimate Arcade Fire's claim to authentic

membership in *indie*, and to the realm of musicianship occupied by dignitaries, Bowie,

Byrne, U2 and Springsteen, and regenerates the authentic ideal.

5.3 Authenticity to Constructed Self - *Identity*

Several of the examined sources revealed stories that Arcade Fire told, and stories told

about the band, that legitimize their claim to *indie* membership and authenticity to self.

Personal trajectories are described so as to suggest embodiment of *indie* values, such as

anti-commerciality, DIY, autonomy and genuineness, indicating coherence between self

and style. This includes personal history, location, actions, and musical aesthetic.

Several of the analyzed interview-based discourses emphasized aspects of the

band's identity in order to suggest authentic *indie* membership and personal authenticity.

For instance, journalist Jonah Weiner interviewed lead singer Win Butler shortly after

Arcade Fire released their second album, *Neon Bible* (2007). Throughout the article, he

describes the singer and his band's performances as though 'genuine' and unembellished by effects. In reflecting on his experience of a performance, Weiner states:

> *This is the most beautiful thing I have been a part of*… Which is pretty remarkable for a band working in indie-rock, sovereign territory of the ironic and jaded… there's an exalting sense of hugeness about them, from the fleet of musicians surrounding the Herman Munster-size singer to the capital letter themes - Death, Love, Desire, Fear, Faith, War - and surging arrangements. They rarely play solos, preferring the galvanizing effect of bashing out a melody *en masse*. (2007, 59)

Weiner's description begins with the affect of experiencing Arcade Fire in concert. Although he describes a sort of mystical aspect of the band, the effect, whether intended or not, is to suggest that the band is able to transcend mainstream culture, meaningful to *indie*. Weiner alternates between typical characteristics of *indie*, such as irony, seriousness and simplicity, and aspects of Arcade Fire's originality, framed as though complementary, such as the themes to which they perform, sheer size of the band, and their fans' common response to 'galvanize' with the band. Through his experience, Weiner discursively constructs the band's identity as commercial-free, communal and therefore, authentic *indie*.

Band members were found to construct their identity through interviews. For instance, in an interview with Regine, she reveals her personal connection to Haiti:

> My parents were forced out of the country in the 1960s… When I finally went there for the first time, in 2008, I was amazed at how much I knew about the place without having seen it. And it became important for all of us to get involved in grass-roots charity projects after the earthquake. Its incredible to see how these very hands-on organizations can have such a massive effect on a place that really needs help. (Lewis 2011, 22)

Regine's comments reveal a DIY morale and operate as a claim to *indie* membership. Her authenticity to self is also expressed by her personal connection to Haiti through lineage

and the experience of visiting it. Finally, Regine's autonomy is represented by choice to

act on her convictions and support relief to the disaster stricken country. In a related

question, Regine and Win are asked, "Can charities really help in places like Haiti?" This

question probes the integrity of relief aid and the bands that support it. Again, Regine is

aware of this concern and responds appropriately:

> Yes, but they have to be well focused… Partners in Health are brilliant, because they really focus on the ground, concentrating on long-term projects. They have about 10 US staff but 5000 Haitian employees that they train - a huge difference. When you go on the ground and see what they've been working on for 25 years, it's really inspiring. You see how fruitful well-directed aid can be. (Lewis 2011, 22)

This interview demonstrates the ways in which the members of Arcade Fire validate their

claim to *indie* membership and their integrity as a band. The publicity serves to legitimize

the band to the magazine's readership, increasing the potential for fan authentication.

Win and Regine met in 2000 and later married while studying at McGill

University in Montreal (O'Hagan 2010; Lewis 2011). While at university, Win moved

from Fine Art, to philosophy, to Religious Studies, and Regine studied Communications

and medieval music. Both considered music an important pastime, even writing a song

together on their first date, but thought that academics would add an intellectual element

to their musical career. The rest of the band also met and formed while studying at

McGill, and is comprised of members from across Canada with the exceptions of singer

Win Butler and his brother Will who grew up in Houston, Texas. Historical background

provides insight into the band's constructed identity.

When incorporated into their lyrics, personal trajectory provides a narrative for

fans to identify with. For instance, Win describes his upbringing in a Houston suburb as

informing a sense of community that includes problem-solving issues of prejudice, seclusion and elitism (O'Hagan; 2010). Calling it, "the tyranny of youth culture," Win says that many of his songs react to the cliques and conflicts that form around basic manifestations of style and taste. His comments reveal common *indie* posturing as though outside of the mainstream and privileged. Although Win and his band's middle class background is different from The Clash's 'working class' background, it is perceived as representative of *indie* culture. The notion that members are talking about 'real life,' suggests that Arcade Fire has first-hand experience with what it is that they are talking about, and implies that they are indeed 'real *indie*.'

Several instances of fans legitimatizing Arcade Fire's constructed identity were found on video performances and comment sites. For instance, one fan compares Arcade Fire to contemporary *pop* bands, constructing their identity as though relevant:

> Zanabism: It's nice to know that in this world filled with Biebers and Lady G's, and Rhiannas that there still is some originality, music with a sincere message that isn't all about either sex/money/high school romances but REAL LIFE, where not all problems consist of the girl or boy that won't [explicit] you. (comment 42, 2011, "Arcade Fire - Wake Up (unstaged)")

This comment groups several contemporary *pop* acts and their lyrical topics as though banal and irrelevant. Zanabism interprets Arcade Fire's music as original, and containing meaningful values such as sincerity. This comment exemplifies the use of narrative to construct the band's identity as authentic *indie*.

Finally, Arcade Fire's manager, Scott Rodger, helps to construct their authentic identity. His unconventional tactics for protecting the band's publishing rights and for promoting their identity has been noted in a variety of ways. One such example includes a direct request to remove the band's second album, *Neon Bible* (2007), from a blogger's

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page until the album is released commercially. While downloading music has become

common to technologically mediated culture,[32] justified in a variety of ways, Rodger's

petition is in the interest of the band's authenticity. He says:

> I don't get lawyers involved or our publishers and labels for stuff like this. I
> simply like to ask politely for it to be removed. The band have worked hard for a
> year to make this album. They are very proud of it. They paid for it themselves.
> No label or outside corporate funding. Just their own hard earned cash. The only
> way for them to get their investment back is by hopefully selling a few cd's. It
> would be great if you, as a music fan, could possibly try and respect this.
> (gyeeker.blogspot.com, 2007)

The informality of Rodger's message constructs the band as representative of *indie* values

such as DIY and anti-commercialism.[33] It also reveals Rodger's limited influence on the

band. His role as manager is not in anarchistic market strategizing as seen with Rhodes

and The Clash, but in preserving Arcade Fire's creative control as the source of their

autonomy and authenticity. In fact, I was unable to locate any sources that would suggest

Rodger had influence over the band's presentation. However, it is plausible that Rodger's

influence is concealed in order to present the band as though self-directed and

autonomous.

Rodger's defense of Arcade Fire, following their Album of the Year award at the

53rd Grammys, reveals a site of idealizing authenticity. Several critics questioned the

merit of the award, including Steve Stoute of the New York Times, who criticized the

Grammys for dishonestly staging Arcade Fire's award and performances to coincide

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[32] The effect of technology use on cultures is the topic of much communications and
mass media research. In this case, it is Rodger's narrative that is examined for
constructed identity.
[33] This quote may also indicate the inadequacy of the authorities to regulate illegal
downloading, or vise versa, the revolutionary potential that technology offers for
influencing copyright law and enforcement (Leman-Langois 2005)

(Montgomery 2011; The Heretic 2011). In videos of the awards show, Arcade Fire

performed once, prior to receiving the award and a second time, immediately following

receipt ("Arcade Fire - Ready to Start" 2011, youtube.com). To Scott Rodger however,

Stoute's critique was an attack on Arcade Fire's authenticity, and the legitimacy of the

Grammys to publicly recognize culturally significant music. Rodger defended his band

by explaining why he thought they deserved the award, appealing to *indie* sympathizers

who espoused values such as DIY, autonomy and anti-commerciality, exemplified in this

statement:

> I'm proud of this band and what they have achieved. We didn't lobby any
> organization for this nor did the band play the game. We paid our own overhead
> to do the event, thus the lack of on stage gimmicks. No label picked up the tab.
> Arcade Fire are now one of the biggest live acts in the world. It's not all about
> record sales. It's about making great records and it's about building a loyal fan
> base. The band makes great albums, they're not a radio driven singles band. On
> top of that, they own their own masters and copyrights and are in complete
> control of their destiny. Things couldn't be better. (The Heretic 2011)

In this example, Rodger discursively constructs Arcade Fire's identity as *indie*,

highlighting their DIY approach to performance and business practice, including a

'gimmick' free performance at the Grammys and the creative control of their music. He

is careful to underline the band's integrity, describing their approach to recording music

in album rather than single format, the latter being implied as mass produced and profit

driven. Rodger justifies the band's integrity by pointing to the authentication of their

fans. This defense operates to construct the band's identity and promote *indie* values to a

wider popular culture. Rodger endorses the Grammys as a machine for legitimating

'good' music. Although the Grammy award compromises *indie* membership by

suggesting mainstream endorsement, it is justified as an infiltration of popular culture by

indie culture. Like The Clash who justified their major label contract as a means to promoting their music to an international audience, Arcade Fire is justified in accepting their award as a means to disseminate *indie* values to a broader public.

Indie culture emphasizes the DIY ethic on a personal level, as opposed to the naïve consumption of mainstream culture (Maddux 2010; Newman 2009). Arcade Fire's songs cover topics that have to do with loss of community, including the death of family members on *Funeral* (2004), the breakdown of the family, government and the environment on *Neon Bible* (2007), and the suburbanization of youth on *The Suburbs* (2010). However, these individualized experiences resonate with many *indie* fans, who in the context of early 21st century western culture, are exposed to factors of increased rates of divorce, media driven images and sounds of war and conflict, a prevailing global economic crisis, and a global awareness of natural and human made disasters, such as tsunamis and nuclear meltdowns. While individuals are inundated with crises via media exposure, in addition to first hand exposure, it is arguable that their resolve is negatively affected because of it (Taylor 1991; Potter 2010). Thus, Arcade Fire's music finds common ground with the experience of *indie* members who desire purpose beyond the humdrum. This desire for meaning takes the *indie* fan and Arcade Fire into the ultimately commercial free realm of the transcendent.

Indie values and individual rights are celebrated as self-realized and personal (Newman 2009). When asked about their religious conviction, Arcade Fire members claim to be spiritual, not religious, which implies a less stringent, individualistic form of belief (Weiner 2007, 59). Spirituality fits within the autonomous ideal. For instance, when asked if he believes in God, Win replies, "I'm more interested in the questions than

the answers. I don't know if God exists, but I can't criticize people for trying to understand these things" (Lewis 2011, 20). Rather than impose a judgment, Win allows fans to draw on the concert experience to shape their own beliefs. In this sense, the contextualized *affect* of their music becomes the goal - inclusive, uplifting and communal. Focusing on affect shifts the authentic ideal of the product or politic to the process or experience.[34] By removing a sense of externally focused politics and focusing on the self, Arcade Fire makes authenticity to self a meaningful aesthetic.

Indie fan membership is articulated in many of the comment sections of YouTube videos. These comments reinforce the DIY ethic, autonomy, and anti-commercialism. In an effort to set Arcade Fire apart from their competition at the 2011 Grammys and justify their win, one fan uses negative valuing:

> SuperGamer87: Not some artist with glamorous looks won the "Album of the Year." Not some artists with 100 million fans (yet) won the "Album of the Year." Not some teen sensation artist won the "Album of the Year." Not some artist with a desperate need of controversial attention using weird fashion and a bizarre sense of hypersexuality won "Album of the Year." The artists with more heart than nearly all there at the Grammys (and who play actual musical instruments live) won the "Album of the Year." ("Arcade Fire - Wake Up (unstaged)"; youtube.com; 2011)

As this fan discourse suggests, Arcade Fire is represented as an 'outsider' or underdog to mainstream culture. This fan conceives of mainstream pop sensations as though they are marketed based on contrivance and social hierarchy related to notions of fame and celebrity, while suggesting that Arcade Fire embodies an authenticity that is attractive to the social outcast. As in *punk*, where talent is downplayed and emotions are celebrated, *indie* discourse emphasizes eccentricity as an indication of authenticity. Reporter Sean

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[34] Arcade Fire uses experience as a site of authenticity work that is discussed in the section: Seeking Authentic Experience.

O'Hagan highlights Arcade Fire's lack of mainstream appeal: "there is something refreshingly uncool about the band - their unflagging onstage exuberance, their typically Canadian politeness, their penchant for pre-show group hugs…Almost single-handedly, they have ruptured the tyranny of almost terminal hipness that has been the common indie-rock currency of late" (2010). O'Hagan legitimizes Arcade Fire's claim to *indie* culture membership by highlighting their 'uncoolness,' or lack of mainstream appeal. Uncoolness in this sense reflects *indie's* posturing relative to *pop* culture and serves as marker of *indie* culture.

According to cultural theorists, *indie* tends to produce hipster elitism in its alienated posture relative to the social mainstream (Tetzlaf 1994; Hibbett 2005; Newman 2009). However, Arcade Fire challenges this stance and makes a claim to personal authenticity by promoting openness and community. The invitation to overcome personal conflict through communal membership comes at the expense of pride and prejudice. Rather than self-deprecating or elitist, Arcade Fire espouses virtues that overshadow self-serving interests. This combines to construct Arcade Fire as a 'true' representation of the authentic *indie* ideal and thus a legitimate member. *Indie* fans in turn embrace the band for exhibiting authenticity and recognize Arcade Fire as members of *indie* culture.

5.4 Authenticity through Status Identity

Much of Arcade Fire's outsider status is related to their constructed identity as discussed above. Several of the data sources construct the band's status as outside the mainstream. Here, the mainstream is generalized to Western culture, commercialized *pop*, and even 'soccer mom' culture. Each case supports a dichotomy between a mainstream that is conceived as corrupted, and an outside perspective that is privileged.

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Several examples discussed above, reveal authenticity through status identity, including Win and Regine's ability to identify and critique aspects of popular culture that are ensnaring and inauthentic. Win draws on his upbringing in suburban America to frame 'the tyranny of youth culture' as a trap of style and taste. His critique is not simply a nostalgic look back rather, he points out the inequalities that separate cliques, and invites a communal, ethereal experience through his music instead. Similarly, Regine uses her heritage to draw her fans' attention away from the North American mainstream. Having grown up in Montreal, she offers one level of outsider status relative to the US, but her parents' emigration from Haiti in the 1960s, and her recent relief efforts in Haiti combine to offer another source of status authenticity. Since an earthquake devastated Haiti in 2009, Win and Regine have devoted time and financial aid to charities like Partners in Health (PIH) and Kanpe, an NGO coordinator in Haiti (O'Hagan 2010). Regine says, "It's emergency after emergency in Haiti because the country's infrastructure is so weak, but one of the things we are working on is long-term aid and coordinated organization. It's less immediately rewarding, but so important" (O'Hagan 2010). Her concern for Haiti takes her fans' focus away from everyday conflict and redirects it. Haiti's location relative to the Western world, where most of Arcade Fire's fans dwell, is foreign. The combination of remoteness and good will frames Arcade Fire's status as outside the mainstream, on an international level, and operates to boost their authenticity through global, 'outsider' status. O'Hagan's reporting legitimizes the band's status to his readership that receives humanitarian work and status as meaningful. It supports the band's claims of authenticity to self, and *indie*.

Reporter John Harris constructs Arcade Fire's identity as though outside of and therefore significant to American *pop* culture. He suggests that Arcade Fire's critique is relevant based on their geography: "The crucial thing is that they're Canadian, so that they're of America, they're of the North American continent, but they look at America as scouts" (BBC2 2008, 5:40). This statement suggests that Arcade Fire gains credibility by their proximity to suburban *indie* culture, yet their detachment from the bigger problems of the USA suggests that they benefit from an objective perspective. Here, mainstream culture is conceived as American and corrupted by commercialized, while Arcade Fire's perspective is International and autonomous. Harris' statement legitimizes the band's claim to *indie* membership.

Indie bands such as Arcade Fire, discursively frame mainstream culture as though inadequate to provide meaningfulness (Newman 2009). In the case of The Clash, the mainstream was framed as though irrelevant, commercialized and racist, which allowed the band to claim *punk* membership. Similarly, Arcade Fire infers that the mainstream is commercialized, manipulative, and 'unreal' in order to claim outsider status. For instance, fan comments exemplify status based authenticity work:

> anthraxCZ: look at the audience - they don't even know what to do, guitars, drums and singing without Autotune they haven't heard in years.
> sjmunoz: yeah! That audience is used to listening to all that Beyonce, Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber crap.
> Smackupify: right on! Autotune has become ridiculous. Arcade Fire has a rawness about them I haven't heard much since the 80s. That alone has earned them some respect in my books. I will definitely have to listen to them more and hear what has made them so special this year. (comments: 17-19, "Arcade Fire - Month of May," youtube.com; 2011)

This conversation discursively frames *pop* music and its fans as contemptible; it idealizes authentic *indie* among music fans, and the legitimacy of Arcade Fire's status as outsiders.

The first comment assumes that mainstream music is made irrelevant by sound

processors like Autotune.[35] The second comment groups several artists together, who are

considered mainstream. Together, these comments frame recording techniques and artists

as though they lack integrity and credibility. These fans distinguish themselves from such

techniques and artists in an effort to gain meaningfulness. This framing is completed in

the final comment where 'rawness' is conceived as indicating credibility while Autotune

indicates inauthenticity. Fans go on to agree with Smackupify and congratulate him for

being 'open-minded.'

In contrast, some fans fail to give credence to Arcade Fire's status-based

authenticity. For example, in response to the video, "Ready to Start" from their Grammy

performance, one fan comments:

> I don't get what's supposed to be so special about this band. I don't actively
> dislike them, and I'd want to like them, as they're based in my country of Canada
> (even though the leader's a Texan or something) - but they sound so ho-hum to
> my ears, with unremarkable singing & an unremarkable, non-adventurous sound.
> they're neither blazing a new trail, nor improving upon any trail somebody else
> blazed first, so far as I can tell. Grammy-schmammy. Yawn (comment 190,
> youtube.com, 2011)

To this fan, Arcade Fire lacks any meaningful stylistic qualities. Although the fan

mentions the band's provenance, he/she does not appear to recognize it as conveying

status-based value. Even if perceived, status is overshadowed by taste related values.

Another fan's response is to endorse Arcade Fire's status, and acts as an attempt to clarify

the first fan's perceived misunderstanding of this:

> I would kill to have a band like this coming out of Australia. This, as one of their
> more 'conventional' songs, probably wasn't the one to judge them on. I love it to

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[35] Autotune is a computer-assissted processor that adjusts a singer's vocals to sound in
tune with instrumental accompaniment.

bits, but if you're looking for something that's 'blazing a new trail', I'd listen to some of their other stuff. And yes, Win Butler is from Texas. They're from all over the place, but they're based in Montreal. And both Win and Regine actually have unique voices. Gotta give them a chance. (comment 195, youtube.com, 2011)

This fan attempts to build consensus by suggesting that Arcade Fire is indeed innovative. He/she suggests that the band's music is not fully appreciated without taking their whole catalog into consideration. He/she argues that Arcade Fire's status is complemented by a multiplicity of provenances, including Montreal as a base of operations. However, this example reveals how status is inconsistently valued among fans, and that its perception largely depends on the fan's conception of mainstream culture.

Status-based authenticity is debated among fans. For instance, following Arcade Fire's Grammy win, one fan voiced his concern over the effect that it might have on the makeup of the band's fanbase. He states, "I hope this Grammy exposure doesn't turn them into a band for soccer moms" (comment 25, 2011 "Arcade Fire - Month of May" youtube.com). This fan idealizes *indie* as comprised of a particular type of member while excluding 'soccer moms' which might otherwise 'fit' with the mainstream. Although many fans authenticate the band's award win as infiltrating - thus converting - the mainstream, this example reveals the susceptibility of status-based credibility to mainstream success. In order to maintain their outside status, Arcade Fire may continue to explore the possibilities of endorsement either from established musicians, or by endorsing young, up and coming musicians that demonstrate originality or innovation in their genre.

5.5 Seeking Authentic Experience

Arcade Fire started their live career in the early 2000s, performing in small clubs and art galleries (O'Hagan 2010; Weiner 2007; Rolling Stone 2011). The combination of small venue size and educated patrons operated as a site where the band aimed their aforementioned critique of 'the tyranny of youth.' Like The Clash, Arcade Fire easily connected with their fans in small spaces. However, cliques, snobbery and elitism, based on style and taste, characterized the social backgrounds of their early audiences. In this context, the band presented their DIY creativity, enticing both gallery and club patrons with their blend of self-constructed style and impassioned lyrics.

Arcade Fire's presentation creates a unique concert experience. Although Arcade Fire has on occasion swelled in number, seven members comprise the core lineup (Weiner 2007; O'Hagan 2010). This is more than the average *rock* band and suggests that their lyrical and musical importance is also of greater magnitude. Gatekeepers were found to create distinction by referring to the band as a *collective*, for democratically swapping a variety of instruments in performance (Weiner 2007; O'Hagan 2010). This creates the impression that the band holds to a collective vision beyond performance, where members share responsibilities and rewards, regardless of ethnicity, class or gender. Instrumentally, the band uses electric guitars, electric bass, xylophone, accordion, hurdy-gurdy, harpsichord, drums, piano, synthesizer, upright bass, pipe organ, violin, trumpet, French horn, and mandolin among others. This mix of predominantly acoustical instruments enriches Arcade Fire's recorded and live sound, suggesting an organic quality, which when compared with highly produced entertainers, is perceived as genuine. By removing 'gimmicks' and limiting effects processing, such as excessive

smoke and lights, and amplification, the connection between band and audience becomes focused (Empire 2010; Weiner 2007). This is seen in Arcade Fire's rendition of "Wake Up" recorded for their DVD, *Miroir Noir* (2009). The apparently impromptu performance at audience level, combined with the popular melody of the chorus, invites crowd participation, effectively creating a communal experience.

Fans' discourses authenticating this experience were commonly found on Internet fan forums. For instance, fans often describe that their experience of Arcade Fire as exhilarating: "best concert I've ever been to live. Period. You seriously need to plan a trip just to see them" (comment 1, "Arcade Fire - Month of May" youtube.com, 2011). In other comments, fans express anticipation of the experience: "I want to experience them live sooooo bad!" (comment 2 "Arcade Fire - Month of May" youtube.com, 2011). Some comments describe the experience as though complementary to their personal character: "Oh, it was an honour to see them live in concert. They sound even better live, in my opinion. My friends and I could connect and feel the music. It was vibrant and tangible" (comment: 98, "Arcade Fire - Ready to Start" youtube.com, 2011). These comments suggest that the experience of music operates as a point of connection between the band and fan, which promotes authentication, whether as 'real *indie*' or otherwise. The unique memory of experience is articulated between fans, operating as a site of authentication.

Performances operate as a site of reflexivity, where bands adjust to their fans' discursively constructed experiences. Win describes the song "Wake Up" as effective in staging a participatory response. Win says, "When we first played "Wake Up," we were the first band of three in a shitty club somewhere and it was like a '[expletive] you!' song. It was like, 'Hey asshole, we're playing - pay attention!' Now it's less abrasive

because it functions differently. It's like the big goodbye at the end of a set" (O'Hagan; 2010). When performed in small venues, the participatory aesthetic of "Wake Up" works to suspend preconceptions and arguably increases the opportunity to attract fans. When audiences volunteer their attention, they simultaneously allow for authentication to occur. Situating the performance of "Wake Up" at the end of a concert is an adjustment to fans' experience, which continues to attract fans' attention, arguably increasing the opportunity for authentication, such as 'real *indie*' membership, despite the changing composition of their audiences. For instance, "Wake Up" is relocated to the end of their set in a sort of send off in the video performance, "Arcade Fire - Wake Up (Unstaged)," (2010) live from Madison Square Garden in New York City. The accessible chorus invites participation from their audience whose whole-hearted response legitimates the band. When the militant trudging rhythm at the start changes to an up-tempo shuffle at the end, the audience erupts into a triumphal dance. The experience seems stimulating and uplifting and the concert could be interpreted as reviving and to a lesser extent as entertaining, redirecting focus from the band's technical skill to their communal leadership. The intent of the performance is to create the impression that the experience is historically significant.

After the success of their first album *Funeral* (2004), Arcade Fire took to acquiring a church outside of Montreal (Weiner 2007). Here, the band recorded songs for their second and third albums, *Neon Bible* (2007) and *The Suburbs* (2010), respectively, taking advantage of the building's acoustics and pipe organ. Large stone, tile clad walls and high ceilings textured the instrumentation in such a way as to allow sound to take on meaning, and structure the band's performance and to inform fans' experience. For

instance, sounds that are produced in church-like environments are often described as

ominous and big, following a longer decay due to fewer obstructions. According to

journalist, Jonah Weiner, "For a band that wanted to tap the hopes and fears of listeners,

recording in, performing at and incorporating the sounds of churches was a way to evoke

something at once vaulted and unknowingly vast" (2007, 61). Weiner's comments draw

on the cultural impact of the church as a social institution, suggesting that the building's

historical significance, in addition to structure, affects experience. Spatial environment

allows bands and their fans to distinguish themselves from their peers and boost their

originality. The experience of performing in such a space conjures associations with its

history and reputation while allowing the band to choose what elements of those histories

to use, and which to dissociate from. Arcade Fire's claims of authenticity to self and *indie*

membership, are symbolized by their unique association with the church they record in.

Journalists like Weiner, legitimizes the band by suggesting that their recordings provide

greater social significance than that offered by the average popular musician.

Coordinated with the release of *Neon Bible* (2007), Arcade Fire performed a

series of five consecutive concerts at Judson Memorial church in Greenwich Village,

New York City (Weiner 2007). This was part of a week that included promotional

performances on Saturday Night Live[36] as well. New York City and Greenwich Village

are associated with counter-cultures that have resided and performed there for

generations, and include beatniks, folkies and homosexuals. Because *indie* culture

considers counter-cultural sentiments to be at its core, Arcade Fire was able to increase

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[36] Saturday Night Live is a weekend comedy television show that showcases a variety of
popular actors and musicians, exposing them to a broad viewing audience.

the legitimacy of their claim to membership through association with the status of the historical figures of New York's counter-cultural scene. The historical relevance of Judson combined with the band's musical presentation to create a unique experience. Appropriating spaces to their own purpose challenges set notions of design and functionality, and sets Arcade Fire apart as an innovative band. Like The Clash who performed a series of concerts at Bond's in New York City, Arcade Fire used Judson to create a unique subjective experience with their fans. However, unlike The Clash, churches were used on this tour to complement their construction of spiritual etherealness and their claim to *indie* membership. The band's use of acoustics signifies a commercial-free, technology-free, and timelessness aspect to performance.

The concert experience is a carefully conjured aspect of Arcade Fire's music that is perceived as innovative. Win says:

> The difference between us and Nirvana is that we've never had a big radio hit. So the people who turn up to our shows, they're not waiting for that one big song. They're buying into the whole experience, and that's enormously gratifying. I guess to be a great band you either have to have a hundred hits of no hits at all! We're going the latter route. It's kinda working for us! (Lewis 2011)

Win references Nirvana, largely considered an authentic *grunge* band. While this may be perceived as a claim to the tradition of authenticity (torch-passing), the relevance of this quotation is in reference to the quest for authentic experience. Arcade Fire's lack of a 'radio hit' is negligible when compared to their underground status, which allows them to construct the unique experience of their concerts as authenticated by their fans. Win's idea that great bands must produce either many hits or no hits, is a claim to *indie* membership: a commercial free experience is more valuable to *indie* culture than

songwriting prowess. As the band's fans continue to grow in number and journalists continue to cover the band, Arcade Fire is legitimated as an authentic *indie* band.

Interviews effectively disseminate the authenticity ideal by legitimating both fans and musicians' questions together. For instance, journalist John Lewis' article with Win Butler and Regine Chassagne reveals questions asked by fans and the band's contemporaries. Much of the discourse constructs notions of authentic experience. For instance, "Katie in Chicago" asks, "What's more fun - playing to a few dozen people in a Montreal club or playing to tens of thousands of people in an arena? Does it make a difference to your shows?" (Lewis 2011, 20). This question reveals a common concern among *indie* fans about the effect of commercial success on the concert experience. In *indie*, it is more meaningful for bands' presentations to appear raw and undeveloped, as opposed to conjured and over-produced, so as to suggest a reflection of character which is unaffected by commercial goals. As stated earlier, Arcade Fire has gained a reputation for affecting evocative experiences in concert. However, bands commonly lose this value after they achieve commercial success. Win and Regine are quick to pick up on this concern and reassure the fan that their integrity as *indie* remains:

> Win: In the smaller shows we are more aware of the technical side, 'cos when a string breaks you have to deal with it yourself. But the act is pretty much the same. (Lewis 2011)

Win acknowledges a concert-size related difference in the technical aspect of their performances, but considers it negligible compared to consistency in affect. Regine continues:

> In a weird way, we don't really change what we do. I just give people my all, even if its 60 people or 6000. Or, indeed, 60000. The real difference was when we

played this big, open-air community concert in rural Haiti, four hours north of
Port-au-Prince - we were playing for people who didn't know our music…
Win: They had no idea who we were. So, to provide some context, we did some
rock'n'roll covers, including a version of The Rolling Stones' "The Last Time",
and then we played our own material. We've always tried to break through to
audiences, to move the most stand-offish people. I think there's a universal energy
to rock music, and we wanted people to connect with that, even if it was a totally
alien experience to them. It ended up being one of the most amazing live gigs we
ever played. (Lewis 2011)

Regine maintains that her commitment to performances is consistent regardless of size.

This is meant to reassure fans that the band's performance is uncorrupted by growth, or

commerciality, with the exception of cases such as their Haiti concerts. Here, Win

elaborates on the band's improvised strategy of connecting with their fans, resorting to

the performance of cover tunes. The exception is not meant to compromise the band's

claim to *indie* or authenticity to self, rather, it explicates the band's capability to adapt to

the situation and crowd.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

A combination of independent record label backing, DIY attitude manifested in style and

composition, spirituality and morality provides a basis for Arcade Fire's claim to *indie*

membership. A discreet political-commercial agenda allows the band to focus on

intensifying the affect of their music, which creates the impression that subjective

experience holds the potential for a meaningful existence, and works to attract gatekeeper

and fan endorsement, which increases the potential for authentication. Arcade Fire's

claims-making is endorsed by established musicians, revealed through interview-based

discourse, 'torch-passing' performances, and in fan forums. The band's identity is

symbolized visually and through the narratives told about them and the stories that they

tell. These discourses operate to legitimatize values such as anti-commerciality, DIY and

autonomy, and subjective experience, to its fans in order to gain their endorsement. Although Arcade Fire's manager appears to play an indirect role in constructing the band's identity, compared with The Clash, his narrative reveals an idealization of the authentic ideal. His limited influence on the band increases Arcade Fire's claim to autonomy through creative control. Their lyrical critique of American youth culture is legitimated by their outside perspective. In this case, Arcade Fire's status is quite literal, when framed dichotomously, from their base in Montreal, Canada, outside of the USA. The band's performance technique, compared with popular trends, is perceived as distinct and innovative. However, status based authenticity work is inconsistent. Despite journalists' best efforts, fans debate the legitimacy of claims to *indie* authenticity through status. Authentic experience is comprised of a commercial-free aspect and a subjective aspect. Corporate sponsorship, advertising, marketing and promotion are eliminated from the concert experience in order to boost the perception of spontaneity, increase connection with fans, and expedite the process of authentication. Experience is heightened with the appropriation of traditional structures, such as churches, for untraditional purposes. As such, the interpretation of place plays an important role in discursively constructing experience as meaningful and unique, and often draws on intertextual meanings. The fans' consumptive pursuit of subjective experiences legitimates the performer as innovative, original and authentic *indie*.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Authenticity has become an important aspect of music culture, meaningful to those who are actively involved in its construction. Its pursuit has led to the development of musical cultures in which actors reference past representations of authenticity while simultaneously contemporizing them. Despite historical and contextual changes, authenticity has been idealized in the emergence of *punk* and *indie* culture, characterized by opposition to mainstream culture in its economic, ethical and even aesthetic makeup.

Throughout this thesis I have explored the ways in which actors discursively construct notions of authenticity through the use of narrative, visual and aural cues. While past studies tend to suggest that music's production and consumption occurs in isolated spheres by autonomous actors, I have argued that in fact, music is an interactive process. It was revealed that these actors are inextricably linked by a collective pursuit of an ideal, the ethical effect of which is to define cultural boundaries and exclude from membership, those for whom cultural or personal authenticity is not yet idealized. In this circuit, performers, such as The Clash worked to present themselves so as to convey notions of authenticity, which referred to *punk* culture, such as the appropriation of mainstream fashion and musical style to their own ends. As fans responded to The Clash, *punk* authenticity became established, the rules of membership elaborated by cultural gatekeepers in interviews and historical accounts. This pattern of interaction was found to exist in data related to Arcade Fire and *indie*, which revealed an interactive process between the band, its fans and gatekeepers. However, some interesting differences were found that we can attribute to historical and contextual differences.

In their early career, The Clash's claims-making was received by London's disenfranchised working-class youth, collectively characterized by a lack of career opportunity and/or the perception of 'no future.' The interpretation of The Clash's performances as though representative of their struggle against a parent culture operated as a focal point in *punk*. The band's distinction from the mainstream, embellished through their use of style was perceived as though innovative and original, worked to attract the legitimatization of gatekeepers and the endorsement of established musicians. Combined with the efforts of their manager, and major label backing, The Clash became able to attract fans. In fact, this support sustained their efforts despite occasional contradictions in their presentation, such as commercial success. In *punk* culture, commercialism was seen to compromise authentic membership and personal authenticity, and challenged the band's goals of international success. In order to overcome these challenges, The Clash and their managers used the endorsement of established icons while simultaneously conjuring a performance atmosphere in which they could heighten the subjective affect of their music. Throughout their career, this worked to connect the band with their fans, key actors in establishing the band's multi-faceted authenticity.

Comparatively, Arcade Fire's claims-making was found to be received by a more affluent suburban middle-class youth. In attracting their fans' authentication, the band addressed what they perceived to be a 'tyranny of youth,' characterized by pretension and snobbery. In this context, as with The Clash, the status quo was framed as though related to, if not the cause of this strain, while the band's identity was constructed as though transcendent, suggesting status-based authenticity. The narrative construction of band members' varied backgrounds, indeed the location of their base of operations, were used

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to suggest an autonomous and commercial-free, critical perspective. Arcade Fire avoided challenges to their status and claims-making, which The Clash encountered throughout their career, by emphasizing creative control and by presenting their label and managerial support as though limited to the relatively remote, international distribution realm of the music industry. DIY musical and fashion style supported their autonomy, interpreted by gatekeepers and fans as though innovative and original, and operated to distinguish the band from their peers. Endorsement from the 'b-boys,' Bowie, Byrne, Bono, and Bruce, worked to further distinguish Arcade Fire, however, by suggesting that they belong in the company of the popular elite. The subjective experience of the band was repeatedly conjured in such a way as to suggest independence from mainstream *pop* culture, adding another layer of authenticity to Arcade Fire.

The Clash and Arcade Fire both pursued a relational connection with their fans on a level that was unprecedented. Compared to corporate *rock*, in which innovative status was perceived as though compromised by commercialism, *punk* and *indie* made a deliberate effort to connect with their fans by focusing on relevance. This was revealed in The Clash's 'writing about what matters,' which at first included local politics and later, international politics, and Arcade Fire's use of Internet technology to communicate with their fans. Relevance, and the opportunity to act upon political convictions, such as the support of activist campaigns, became a site of meaningful interaction between bands and their fans. Both bands took advantage of small to mid-sized venue spaces in which performances were characterized by limited embellishment, and direct engagement with their audiences, such as casual violence in *punk* shows, and seemingly impromptu crowd participation in *indie*. The appropriation of traditional spaces for non-traditional ends was

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interpreted as though meaningful and innovative. The interactive production of a unique performance experience worked to level the ritualized imbalance between stage performer and paying audience, which was perceived in commercialized *pop*.

Arcade Fire developed a pursuit of personal authenticity within *indie*, which The Clash began with *punk*. By connecting with their fans through concert experiences, and pursuing the authentic ideal in their presentation of anti-commerciality, these bands were forced to consider the ways in which they represented their beliefs, and vise versa; they were forced into believing their presentation. In order to remain consistent with their critique of mainstream culture, The Clash embodied antagonism, openly criticized *pop* bands, and claimed working-class origins in interviews. They worked this out in autograph sessions, where they would idealize *punk* values with their fans. Similarly, Arcade Fire would use Internet based forums to glean *indie* values from their fans, which they would in turn, present in performance. Interviews allowed the band to construct their identity as though authentic, in some cases responding directly to fans' questions. Internet based sites revealed the ways in which fans idealize personal authenticity, completing the circuit of authentication.

The Clash were different from Arcade Fire in that they were amongst the first of an emerging culture, arguably more original than *indie*, a genre which appears to build upon the accomplishments, and improve the failings of *punk*. Both bands appeared to follow a trajectory in which their growth was characterized by, and contingent upon, first, claims to membership in an established or emergent culture. In the case of The Clash, their claims worked to define the boundaries of *punk* and were therefore perceived as though innovative, attracting status-based authenticity. Second, both bands benefitted

from the endorsement of established bands, particularly in the early part of their careers, yet Arcade Fire's transition to 'torch-passer' can only be assumed to be forthcoming. Third, the intensity of fan support is challenged by commercial success. Although fan growth suggests increased support, and therefore increased authentication, later fans are often criticized as though 'band wagon jumpers,' compared to the early fans, whose extended temporal commitment is perceived as though indicative of increased dedication. In order to guard against the appearance of compromise, bands claim a higher status than membership allows them, characterized by innovation and originality.

In music culture, the pursuit of authenticity seems to complement, if not enrich claims of innovation and originality. It works to establish performers in a predefined culture, and attract the attention of fans. However, as bands innovate, they simultaneously claim distinction from their established culture and the status quo, attaining a privileged perspective. The Clash and Arcade Fire gained status as innovative-originals after claiming membership, receiving fan authentication and gatekeeper legitimatization. As a result of this process, they achieved the highest possible position privileged by Euro-American music culture.

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