

**Working in the Creative Economy:
The Spatial Dynamics of Employment Risk for
Musicians in Toronto**

By

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

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Over the past decade the introduction of MP3's, file sharing networks and illegal downloading has fundamentally changed the music industry, structurally and spatially. In the wake of this restructuring it is now estimated that 95% of all musicians in Canada operate independently of record companies (Canadian Independent Recording Artist Association or 'CIRAA'). Digital technologies afford independent musicians greater freedom and control over how and where they live and work. Although economic geographers have been quick to examine the impact of the so called 'MP3 Crisis' on record sales and the major record labels, little is known about how changes at the macro-scale affect the working lives of individual musicians in specific locations. As a result, this dissertation focuses on the employment experiences and spatial dynamics of independent musicians in Toronto. Drawing on sixty-five in-depth interviews with musicians and key informants in the music industry, the thesis documents the intersections between technology, work and space. In particular, the analysis highlights the ways in which the new creative and spatial freedoms, associated with independent music production, are accompanied by intensified competition and employment risk, which musicians experience in an increasingly individualized way. Surviving in the current marketplace requires independent musicians to perform a range of new tasks and exhibit a higher degree of professionalism. Accordingly, the research outlines

some of the reasons why some musicians are rejecting and reworking traditional bohemian lifestyles, spatial patterns and risk mediation strategies. In particular, there is growing evidence of new forms of networking and of the increased importance of strategic collaborations between musicians and fashion designers. There are also signs that some musicians are relocating from the downtown core to the surrounding suburbs, and that musical talent is becoming redistributed across the city-region. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates the need for specialized policies to incubate and retain creative talent in an increasingly global and digital marketplace.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Today, 'labour geography' has grown to become a sub-discipline in its own right within human geography. Its main agenda is to move beyond capital-centric interpretations of economic restructuring and the production of space by recasting workers as active participants in these processes (Herod 1997; Lier 2007). One such example is the ongoing analysis of changing patterns of work during Post-Fordism, including the expansion of 'non-standard employment' (Kalleberg 2000; Blair 2001), 'flexible employment' (Christopherson 2002b; Kalleberg 2003), 'precarious employment' (Cranford and Vosko et al. 2003; Vosko 2006; Waite 2009) and 'risk' (Beck 1992 2000; Allen and Henry 1997; Ekinsmyth 2002). Putting aside differences in terminology, geographers have argued that work is becoming increasingly fragmented; contractually, temporally and spatially. As Lier points out, "fragmentation relates to how, where, when and by whom work is organized in advanced economies" (2007, 828). This fragmentation is often linked to the 'flexible' strategies, used by North American firms to compete in the global arena and to generate profits for their shareholders (Ekinsmyth 2002). Christopherson (2002b: 2) defines this flexibility as,

the ability of firms to adjust labor inputs in response to changes in product and the volume of demand. Flexibility includes 'numerical' adjustments, in the number of workers or working hours, and 'functional' adjustments, in the application of work time to various tasks or the purchase of needed skills in the external labor market. It also includes the ability to adjust wages in response to changes in the supply of labor or the demand for skills. The flexibility of an economy is measured by such indicators as the degree of wage dispersion, the proportion of the workforce in numerically flexible jobs (part-time and temporary work contracts), the extent of subcontracted inputs to the production process, and the rate of job turnover.

In the case of the North American music industry, the shift toward flexibilization, during the late-1990's, constituted an essential survival strategy. As illegal downloading and

the so-called 'MP3 Crisis'¹ greatly reduced the ability of major labels to sell recorded music, firms such as Seagram/Universal aggressively adjusted and flexibilized their labour inputs². In particular, the major labels terminated existing recording contracts and drastically downsized the range of services and supports provided to musicians who remained signed. In the wake of this restructuring it is now estimated that 95% of all the musicians in Canada are not affiliated with record companies of any size and are, therefore, by definition independent (Canadian Independent Recording Artist Association or 'CIRAA'). Several geographers have investigated the causes and consequences of the 'MP3 Crisis' (Leyshon 2001; Jones 2002; Connell and Gibson 2003; Leyshon et al. 2005; Fox 2005; Power and Hallencreutz 2005). However, as these studies focus on the major labels, little is known about how changes at the macro-scale affect the working lives of individual musicians in specific locations. As a result, this dissertation focuses explicitly on the employment experiences and spatial dynamics of independent musicians in Toronto. In particular, I outline the broad set of processes that have given rise to contemporary independent music production. I examine the ways in which independent musicians experience employment, risk and networking. I also explore the strategies independent musicians are employing to compete in the contemporary marketplace. Finally, I investigate why and how the demands of independent music production are altering the traditional spatial distribution of musicians in Toronto.

¹ An 'MP3' refers to a software program called MPEG-I Audio Layer 3 which was developed and introduced by the Motion Pictures Expert Group of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The main purpose of the MP3 was to standardize pictures and audio files in order to facilitate international exchanges by the television industry (Leyshon 2001). The 'MP3 Crisis' refers to the introduction of file sharing networks such as Napster, which facilitated the widespread practice of illegally downloading copyrighted music files in MP3 format. This practice constituted a structural shock to the North American music industry, which over time resulted in a dramatic industrial and spatial reorganization of the music industry.

² According to Hiatt and Serpick (2007), more than 5,000 record company employees were laid off between 2000 and 2007.

1.2 Employment and Risk

The flexibilization and fragmentation of work serves to individualize the way work is structured, distributed across space, and experienced by workers. In contrast to the centralized nature of manufacturing in Fordism, which facilitated stable long-term employment, unionization and collective responses to employment 'risk'³, today many workers, face increasingly insecure employment, and are forced to fall back on their own resources, to construct their own 'biographies' (Beck 1992; Leslie 2002).

Although several case studies highlight the ways in which service workers experience risk and fragmentation (Allen and Henry 1997; Reimer 1998) individualization is particularly acute in the cultural industries (Ekinsmyth 1999). In her case study of magazine publishing in London, for example, Ekinsmyth (2002) argues that firms are pursuing flexibilization strategies in response to changing market demand and as a direct result, risk and responsibility have been devolved from firms to individual workers;

The organization of production in magazine publishing has significantly altered over the past 20 years. Consumer tastes and demand have changed and this demand is now apt to be unstable, fluctuating and unpredictable. Both the increasingly large multinational and multi-functional corporations and the smaller firms in the sector have responded in their magazine divisions by: flattening structures; devolving decision making, responsibility and enterprise risk to actors at 'the coal-face'; flexibilizing their operations; and reorganizing production to ensure ready responsiveness to changing consumer demand (Ekinsmyth 2002, 234).

In addition, recent studies allude to the role technology plays in altering the contractual arrangements, spatial organization and employment structures within cultural industries (Neff 2005; Leyshon 2009). Digital technologies are catalyzing further rounds of flexibilization, fragmentation and individualization for workers and firms in the future. At

³ The conceptualization of risk in this thesis is based on the work of Ulrich Beck (1992 1994,2000). Put simply, Beck defines risk "as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself" (1992, 21).

present, however, the exact nature and magnitude of these changes remain unclear (Greffé 2004).

There is a need to explore the relationships between technology, work, and space in cultural industries. Geographers have begun to examine the capacity of communication technologies and digital production to decentralize economic activities, which are currently clustered in space, such as cultural production and networking (Gibson 2003; Neff 2005; Scott and Pope 2007; Leyshon 2009). There is also evidence that cultural workers are more reliant on physical proximity and face-to-face interaction than ever before (Christopherson 2002a; Ekinsmyth 2002; Grabher 2002; Neff, 2005). In terms of obtaining and performing contracts, individuals who work as freelancers in advertising, magazine publishing and new media are tied to specific labour markets, networks and spaces. As Ekinsmyth (2002) points out, despite the capacity for 'distance work,' the majority of freelancers remain in the city because of the opportunities for paid work, learning and networking. This finding is supported by Neff's (2005) case study of new media workers in New York's 'Silicon Alley.' As she explains,

digital media and information technologies have enabled work and organization to occur at a distance. There is, however, a paradox in the changing place of production. As distance work becomes technically easier, employees remain bound to place through their social networks, or the set of people and organizations linked by social relationships, which mediate entrée into organizations and industries. Even within the industries that create the technologies for distance work, the core business activities often cluster in relatively small geographic areas. Technology has not rendered work and organization "spaceless"; nor have we seen the "death of distance" as earlier critics predicted. However, technology has changed the place of production. In the case of New York's Internet industry—or "Silicon Alley," as it was commonly called—the designers and front-office employees clustered around a very narrow swath of Manhattan. (Neff 2005, 134)

In terms of networking, geographers have argued that face-to-face interaction remains the most effective and preferred form of transmitting and receiving information

and knowledge despite advances in communications technologies (see also Grabher 2002).⁴ While codified knowledge may be disseminated effectively across virtual channels, the exchange of tacit knowledge requires face-to-face interaction and, by extension, co-location.

With regard to the cultural industries, in particular, geographers assert that production, employment and networking are increasingly concentrated and predicated on spatial proximity. While the evidence for this claim is compelling, the transferability of such an assumption from one industry to another or between different groups of workers remains uncertain. In fact, there may be cleavages between the employment experiences and spatial dynamics of individuals who work in related but ultimately distinct industries. There may be significant variation in the degree to which technology can and has altered the structural and spatial patterns of work in specific industries and in different locations.

1.3 Research Questions

This dissertation examines the extent to which music work is increasingly being fragmented contractually, spatially and temporally and how this impacts the lives of musicians. A key aim is to analyze the degree of risk and uncertainty musicians experience as a result of technological change and the need to operate increasingly as a self-reliant entrepreneur. In the literature on creative work in the digital age, technology is often described as having a democratizing effect (Leyshon 2009). Indeed, Von Hippel (2005: 122) argues:

Today, in sharp contrast, user firms and increasingly even individual hobbyists have

⁴ Another important component of face-to-face interaction is the ability to transmit 'buzz'. According to Bathelt et al. (2004) buzz refers to; the information and communication ecology created by face-to-face contacts, co-presence and co-location of people and firms within the same industry and place or region. This buzz consists of specific information and continuous updates of this information, intended and unanticipated learning processes in organized and accidental meetings, the application of the same interpretative schemes and mutual understanding of new knowledge and technologies, as well as shared cultural traditions and habits within a particular technology field, which stimulate the establishment of conventions and other institutional arrangements. Actors continuously contribute to and benefit from the diffusion of information, gossip and news by just 'being there' (Bathelt et. al 2004, 38).

access to sophisticated design tools for fields ranging from software to electronics to musical composition. All these information-based tools can be run on a personal computer and are rapidly coming down in price. With relatively little training and practice, they enable users to design new products and services—and music and art—at a satisfyingly sophisticated level.

On the surface it appears as though technology provides independent musicians with unprecedented freedom and opportunity. It is crucial to ascertain whether or not this freedom is experienced on the part of individuals.

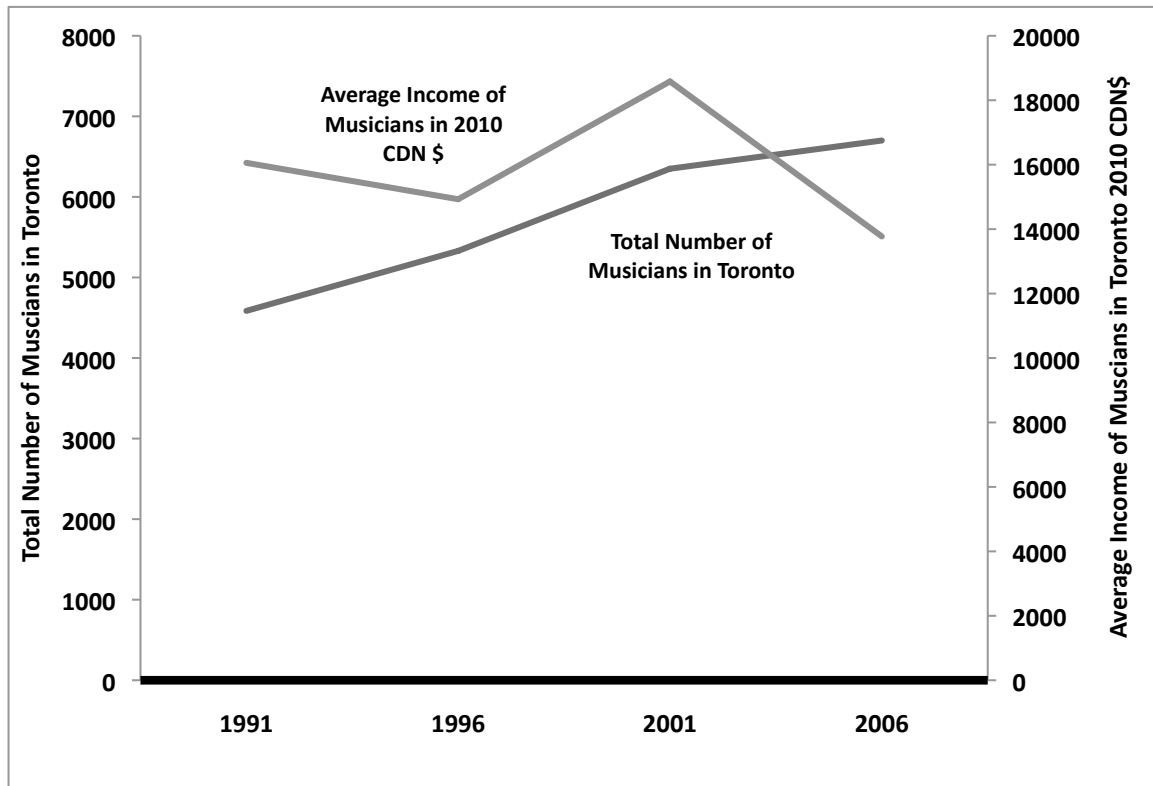
A second objective is to explore how technological change and the shift toward professionalization currently being experienced by independent musicians is altering their spatial preferences and locational patterns. Indeed, in the wake of technological change, there is a pressing need to revisit the traditional assumption that musicians prefer to live and work in ‘bohemian’ spaces which feature specific spatial and aesthetic properties (in particular, it is incumbent on geographers to determine whether or not musicians still gravitate towards bohemian spaces and continue to embrace bohemian lifestyles).

A third aim is to investigate the extent to which the structures and demands of independent music production are altering the networking arrangements and practices of independent musicians. In cultural industries where paid contracts are abundant, for example, networking is described as the best way to find and obtain freelance employment (Christopherson 2002a; Ekinsmyth 2002). When paid work becomes scarce, however, workers may be less willing to share information about employment opportunities (Christopherson 2008). In the music industry, technology, current market conditions and the demands of independent music production reduce not only opportunities for paid work but also the amount of discretionary time musicians can allocate to networking. As a result, the impetus for social networking may be quite different for independent musicians and worthy of further academic attention.

Finally, the thesis considers how cultural workers mediate risk. Beyond the general strategies of locating in thick labour markets, taking on multiple contracts and networking, (Christopherson 2002a; Ekinsmyth 2002; Grabher 2002) little is known about how individual workers mediate risk in different cultural industries. In the literature on the music industry, the emphasis has been on the causes and consequences of the 'MP3 crisis,' the subsequent decline in record sales and ultimately the restructuring of music production and distribution at the scale of global firms. There is currently a dearth of information on how independent musicians cope with their precarious employment conditions and a marketplace, which is marked by increasing competition. Indeed, just as technology may lower entry barriers and allow an unprecedented number of producers to enter the marketplace, the widespread practice of illegal downloading has reduced the value of recorded music, traditionally the industry's most lucrative good. Figure 1.1, for example, illustrates the steady rise in the absolute number of musicians in Toronto and the decline of average incomes between 2001 and 2006. As a result, the contemporary marketplace features an oversupply of musicians and ubiquitous music-related products, which carry limited and uncertain value. Against this backdrop, independent musicians are required to find ways to differentiate and add value to their products. To date, however, examples of the strategies musicians employ to survive in the contemporary marketplace are limited to the popular press. Therefore, there is a need for geographers to explore these strategies empirically.⁵

⁵ The need to understand the response of music producers to digital technologies. Other industries, such as publishing will also be affected by new technologies such as Amazon's Kindle and Apple's iPad.

Figure 1.1: Competition in Toronto's Marketplace for Music⁶



1.4 Research Design

My empirical investigation of independent musicians in Toronto draws on what Markusen and King (2003) refer to as 'occupational approach' to talent attraction and retention. This approach focuses on understanding the characteristics, skills and employment experiences of individuals who work in specific occupations and locations.

According to the 2006 census, Toronto is home to the largest concentration of musicians (4,070) in Canada (Adams 2010). Toronto has been repeatedly recognized in the popular press as being home to a series of burgeoning music scenes and a growing number

⁶ The data for this chart is taken from Statistics Canada, catalogue number – 97-564-XCB2006005 (2006) and Catalogue Number – 97-0012-xcb01050 (2001, 1996, 1991). The dollar amounts were converted to 2010 CDN\$ using inflation rates provided by the Bank of Canada.

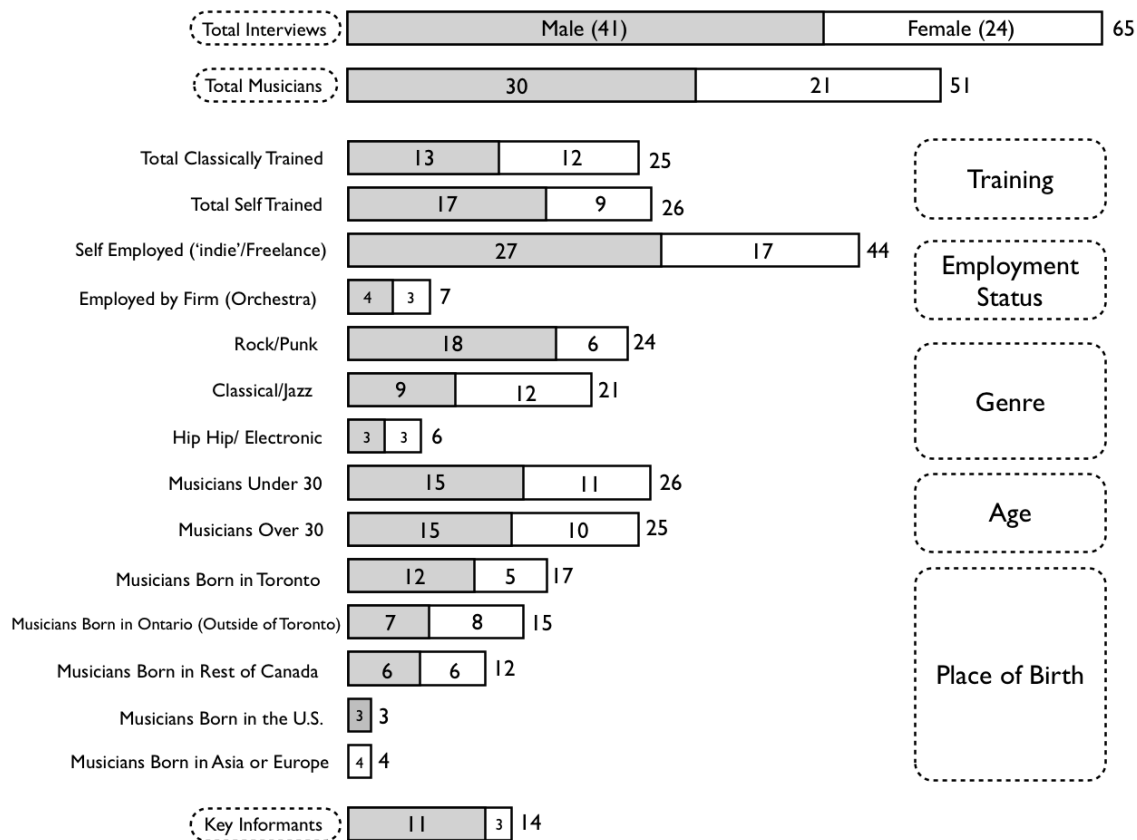
of independent musicians.⁷ As Canada's largest music economy, Toronto presents an interesting case to study the working lives of independent musicians. The presence of other cultural industries in Toronto, including, film, design and fashion, also provides opportunities to investigate the linkages between these sectors.

The analysis presented in this dissertation is based on qualitative interviews. This method of data collection was chosen because of the nature of the research questions, which aim to investigate the networks, experiences, and careers of individual musicians. When the goal is to investigate a little understood phenomena and to identify important variables, open-ended interviewing is the most appropriate methodological choice (See also Grazian 2004; Jeffri 2004; Wolfe and Gertler 2004). As my research questions focus on the employment experiences and spatial dynamics of independent musicians who live and work in Toronto, I was primarily interested in interviewing musicians. I did, however, also interview a number of key informants who work in the Toronto music industry as educators, producers, studio owners, managers, union representatives, government employees and executives at major and indie record labels. These individuals provided invaluable information about the broader context of industrial restructuring within the music industry, as well as information about important trends within Toronto's music scenes. Many of these individuals have experienced the 'MP3 Crisis' first hand, through their positions in major labels in Canada and the United States. Others, who have participated in Toronto's music scenes for 30 or 40 years, provided useful information about how technology has changed the working lives of musicians. In total, I conducted 65 interviews, of which 51 were with independent musicians. To get a broad cross-section of experiences

⁷ See Quart, February 26, 2006. 'Guided by (many, many) voices.' *New York Times Magazine*.

and opinions, the musicians I interviewed varied by age, gender, level of education, genre, and career stage. Figure 1.2 provides a more detailed picture of research participants.⁸

Figure 1.2: Interview Sample



During the research, project I used a 'snowball' sampling method for identifying participants.⁹ As many of Toronto's musicians cycle between different sources of employment, they are moving targets that are difficult to 'pin down' (James 2006). Therefore, snowball sampling allowed me to use the contacts of my initial participants to

⁸ By targeting classically and self-trained musicians, who participate in different genres within the city, I expected the interviews to produce a range of different employment experiences for the purposes of comparison. What I found, however, was a surprising level of uniformity with respect to how technology is impacting the working lives of musicians in Toronto. Indeed, regardless of training, age, gender or genre, freelancing and independent music production have become the dominant form of employment. Therefore, although I plan to explore the subtle variations between the experiences of different sub-groups in future research, this dissertation focuses on the themes, which proved prevalent throughout the fieldwork, particularly, the causes and consequences of contemporary independent music production.

⁹ Snowballing is defined by Valentine (1997, 116) as "using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else. The initial contact may be a friend, relative, neighbour, or someone from a social group or formal organization."

identify and recruit additional respondents. As a musician myself, I started out by speaking with some people I already knew and at the conclusion of each interview I asked for further contacts. Although one of the main drawbacks with snowball sampling is that it tends to recruit a narrow group of like-minded individuals, I dealt with this disadvantage in two ways. First, by using different entry points, the snowballing generated a diverse group of potential respondents.¹⁰ Second, by asking each respondent to tell me about the three individuals he or she was recommending, I could decipher who, based on their position, would be useful for the study.¹¹

In most cases I contacted potential research participants through email. The hectic schedules of musicians and music professionals compromised my ability to use traditional channels such as phone or mail effectively. Initial email correspondences included the nature of the research, and what their participation in the research project would entail. Moreover, I offered every potential participant the opportunity to follow up with me, over email or over the phone, to ask any further questions about the research project before agreeing to participate.

The interviews were conducted in Toronto between March 2007 and September 2008 and ranged between one and three hours in length. The interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the participants. There was significant variation in where the interviews took place, often depending on the position and preference of the individual respondents. While many of the interviews were conducted in 'third spaces' such as coffee

¹⁰ I contacted musicians working at music stores near my house, musicians I found on MySpace, musicians I found on professional directories, musicians who were recommended to me by colleagues at the University of Toronto and musicians I met at live performances.

¹¹ Another important note, with respect to sampling is that I aimed for what Valentine (1997) refers to as illustrative sampling. That is to say that I was interested in the depth and richness each encounter with a participant could provide rather than the generalizability or the sheer number of people participating in the study.

shops, for example, others were conducted in home studios, offices, performance venues, recording studios and music stores.¹²

This diversity of these locations is noteworthy because it afforded me the opportunity to observe first hand the range of spatial environments where independent musicians live, work and interact.¹³ To ensure consistent coverage of key issues across the interviews, I used an interview guide. To explore unanticipated topics related to my core research questions, however, I did allow participants to diverge from the guide and raise additional issues. In fact, the findings presented in chapter five about the linkages between music and fashion emerged in an organic way during the fieldwork.¹⁴

As Hay (2000, 193) points out, “a researcher has a social, locational and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants and it may be influenced by biographical characteristics such as class, race and gender, as well as various formative experiences.” Prior to entering the field and at the various stages of contacting and interviewing musicians and key informants I tried to be cognizant of my own positionality as a researcher. In fact, one influential factor in choosing this research topic was my own experience as an independent musician and confidence in my ability to relate to the experiences of my respondents in a positive way. According to Valentine (1997: 113),

sharing the same background or similar identity to your informant can have a positive effect, facilitating the development of a rapport between interviewer and interviewee and thus producing a rich detailed conversation based on empathy and

¹² It is important to point out the difficulty I faced in contacting potential participants, scheduling interviews and conducting these interviews. The hectic schedules of the individual musicians, as well as the intense demands on their time meant I had a low response rate to my contact emails. Moreover, even when individuals agreed to participate in an interview, scheduling a time and place to meet often involved several rounds of schedule checking and confirmation. To make matters worse, despite my best efforts to confirm before hand, there were several occasions where the individuals failed to show up for the interview. Although some were rescheduled, others were not.

¹³ To further leverage the ability to observe the spaces in which musicians create, rehearse, perform, and network I attended several performances and visited a range of other spaces used by musicians during the course of my fieldwork. These included, performances venues, recording studios, rehearsal studios, music schools, bars, clubs and coffee shops.

¹⁴ Over the course of my fieldwork I reviewed the effectiveness of my techniques, including my correspondences over email, the phone and the ongoing relevance of the interview guide. Based on these reviews I tweaked my contact email and the interview guide by rewording or re-ordering some awkward questions and adding new questions, including probes that targeted the links between music and fashion and other emerging themes.

mutual respect and understanding. Similarly, you may find it easier to build a rapport with your research participants and conduct interviews if your project is linked to your own interests or you are interviewing people who you have something in common with.

Not surprisingly, in retrospect my personal experience, comfort with the cultural nuances of Toronto's music scene and positionality was an asset in the field, which helped to mitigate potential problems that a complete outsider may have faced.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Following the example put forward by James (2006), I began the process of coding these transcripts by annotating and making notes. This involved reading and analyzing the transcripts sentence-by-sentence and dividing sections by theme. After several iterations I settled on 18 themes, which encompassed all of the data, although many sections fit into more than one theme. The use of these themes is very useful in moving towards a preliminary analysis. As is common with qualitative interviews, my goal was not to establish statistical significance or representativeness but rather analytical plausibility and cogency of reasoning (James 2006). I include verbatim quotations throughout the thesis because it is the best way to demonstrate how meanings and experiences are expressed in the participants' own words, not those of the researcher.

1.5 Outline of Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into six chapters, which I will outline in the following section. Chapter 2 establishes the context for the entire thesis by tracing the impact of technology on the North American recorded music industry and the working lives of individual musicians. I begin by reviewing the period in which the major record labels consolidated their power and controlled the organizational structures, employment conditions and spatial dynamics of the music industry. This is followed by an analysis of how

emerging technologies such as MP3's, the Internet and file sharing networks served to radically alter the landscape of music production, distribution and consumption. I argue that technology has curtailed the power of the major labels and that power has been redistributed to a broad set of actors, including retailers and individual musicians. This is followed by a discussion of how technology makes contemporary independent music production popular for musicians. The remainder of the chapter outlines the employment conditions experienced by independent musicians as a result of these changes, including the broad range of creative and business tasks these workers are now responsible for.

In Chapter 3 I critically analyze the working lives of independent musicians in Toronto. I argue that by facilitating the rise of contemporary independent music production and reducing the value of music-related products in the marketplace, digital technologies have radically altered the structure of music employment. As a result of this restructuring, the working lives of contemporary independent musicians are becoming individualized and fragmented across time and space. This fragmentation creates conflicts for musicians who must balance competing uses of their time, energies and resources. Ultimately, while the democratizing effect of digital technologies and independent production provide the promise of unprecedented control over work and freedom to pursue creativity, I argue that for the majority of independent musicians in Toronto this newfound freedom is illusory. In fact, the fragmented and demanding nature of independent music production not only intensifies the long-standing risks associated with careers in music, but introduces a range of new conflicts, insecurities and barriers to creativity as well.

In Chapter 4 I investigate the changing network ecology of independent musicians in Toronto. I argue that the demands of independent production, competition in the marketplace and the individualization of workers, alter the ways in which independent

musicians network. Building on the work of Christopherson (2002a 2008) I demonstrate that some musicians are forming 'defensive exclusionary networks' to safeguard their access to the dwindling supply of paid work. I also consider other responses to competition and professionalization, including the shift from traditional forms of social networking to what Grabher and Ibert (2006) call 'connectivity' networks. I argue that some musicians have reduced the value they place on networking, and instead prefer to form strategic and short-term collaborations, through virtual spaces, to solve problems and augment deficiencies in their skill-sets. Ultimately, the findings provided in this chapter challenge the conventional view that networking requires physical proximity, and is an indispensable risk mediation strategy for individuals who work in the cultural industries.

In Chapter 5 I revisit the pioneering work of Power and Jansson (2004) on the 'Post-Industrial Music Economy' to consider how independent musicians in Toronto are competing in a marketplace which features decreasing demand for recorded music on one hand, and an oversupply of seemingly ubiquitous musical acts and music-related products on the other. My findings suggest that in order to add value and distinctiveness to their products, independent musicians are collaborating with fashion designers in Toronto. After identifying these collaborative linkages, I examine the mechanisms through which they are forged, and the ways they are becoming instrumental to the survival and success of independent musicians in the contemporary marketplace. Spatially, I examine how independent producers situate their products within the context of local scenes and how these scenes serve as symbolic inputs and signifiers of exclusivity, which adds even more value to music-related products.

In Chapter 6 I argue that the entrepreneurial nature of independent music production and the professionalism required to compete in the digital music industry are

becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile with traditional bohemian lifestyles and spatial preferences. I demonstrate that in order to achieve the most favorable balance between the cost, location and characteristics of their life/work spaces, some musicians in Toronto are relocating from the bohemian enclaves in the downtown to more mundane locations in the inner and outer suburbs. In addition, I argue that a growing range of push and pull factors, such as the cost of living, competition for employment and local 'buzz' influence the spatial patterns of musicians. In this chapter I argue that by privileging downtown clusters as the only sites of creativity, existing academic studies and policy initiatives fail to recognize the increasingly important creative outputs emerging from spaces outside of the core.

In Chapter 7 I integrate and summarize the key findings from the five empirical chapters. I demonstrate the relevance of several dominant themes to current policy debates in Toronto, and I lay out an agenda for future research.

Chapter 2

Technology and the Rise of Independent Music Production

[In 1999] Napster came into being, forever altering the architecture of the entertainment industry, technology and the law, yet society has yet to come to terms with these changes (Allison 2004, 7).

2.1 Introduction

The introduction of MP3's, file sharing networks such as Napster, and the widespread practice of illegally downloading copyrighted music files constituted a structural shock to the North American music industry. As a result, new forms of technologically driven production and distribution are fundamentally altering the music industry, structurally and spatially.¹⁵ While several economic geographers (Leyshon 2001; Jones 2002; Connell and Gibson 2003; Leyshon et al. 2005; Fox 2005; Power and Hallencreutz 2005) have examined the development of file sharing networks and the impact of the so called 'MP3 Crisis' on record sales and the major record labels, the implications of these changes for individual workers remain unexplored. In this chapter, I assess the nature of technological change and its implications for work in the music industry. I argue that by eroding the power of the major record labels, technology is democratizing the production and distribution of music. Technology has created a new structural and spatial order of independent music production in which individual musicians can make and sell music from anywhere.

While technology provides individual workers with unprecedented freedom, it has also radically altered the market for recorded music. In the wake of the technological

¹⁵ It is important to note that technology and the social relations of music are mutually constitutive, evolving in relation to one another. Far from technologies determining new patterns of music production, distribution and consumption, these technologies have emerged out of the changing needs and imperatives of musicians and audiences. As Bingham (1996) makes clear, technologies can only produce change when they are absorbed or domesticated by society. After all, although, computers, the Internet, the MP3 and file sharing programs existed well before 1999, it was not until these technologies were understood and applied in tandem by human actors that the MP3 crisis began.

changes to the music industry, independent musicians face a dichotomy between freedom and risk which forces them to negotiate new opportunities and uncertainties in the digital music industry.

The chapter begins by reviewing the period in which the major record labels consolidated their power and controlled the organizational structures, employment conditions and spatial dynamics of the music industry. This is followed by an analysis of how emerging technologies such as MP3's, the Internet and file-sharing networks served to radically alter the landscape of music production and consumption. I demonstrate how technology has curtailed the power of the major labels and how that power has been redistributed to a broad set of actors, including retailers and individual musicians. The remainder of the chapter outlines the relationship between technology and independent music production and, more specifically, the employment conditions for independent musicians working in the contemporary digital music industry.

2.2 Majors and the Consolidation of Power

In the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's the recorded music industry was populated by dozens of record labels, each varying in size, location, scope and power (Burnett 1996). During the 1980's and 1990's, several rounds of consolidation, in which dominant labels purchased or merged with smaller labels, altered the landscape of the industry. By 1999 the music industry was firmly controlled by five large corporate entities or 'majors'.¹⁶ These were Bertelsmann AG (headquartered in Germany), the EMI group (Britain), Seagram/Universal (Canada), Sony (Japan) and Time-Warner (United States) (Scott 2000,

¹⁶ According to Burnett (1996) most of the independent labels or 'minors' which existed during this period were either owned or controlled by one of the majors.

114).¹⁷ Geographically, the music industry was increasingly globalized and concentrated in the large cities (Tokyo, London and Berlin) where the majors are headquartered. In the United States, for example, the location of recording companies reveals the dominance of three cities – Los Angeles, New York, and, to a lesser extent, Nashville. Independent labels followed this pattern with “51 locating in Los Angeles, 44 in New York, 9 in Nashville, and 151 in the rest of the country in 1998” (Scott 2000, 119).

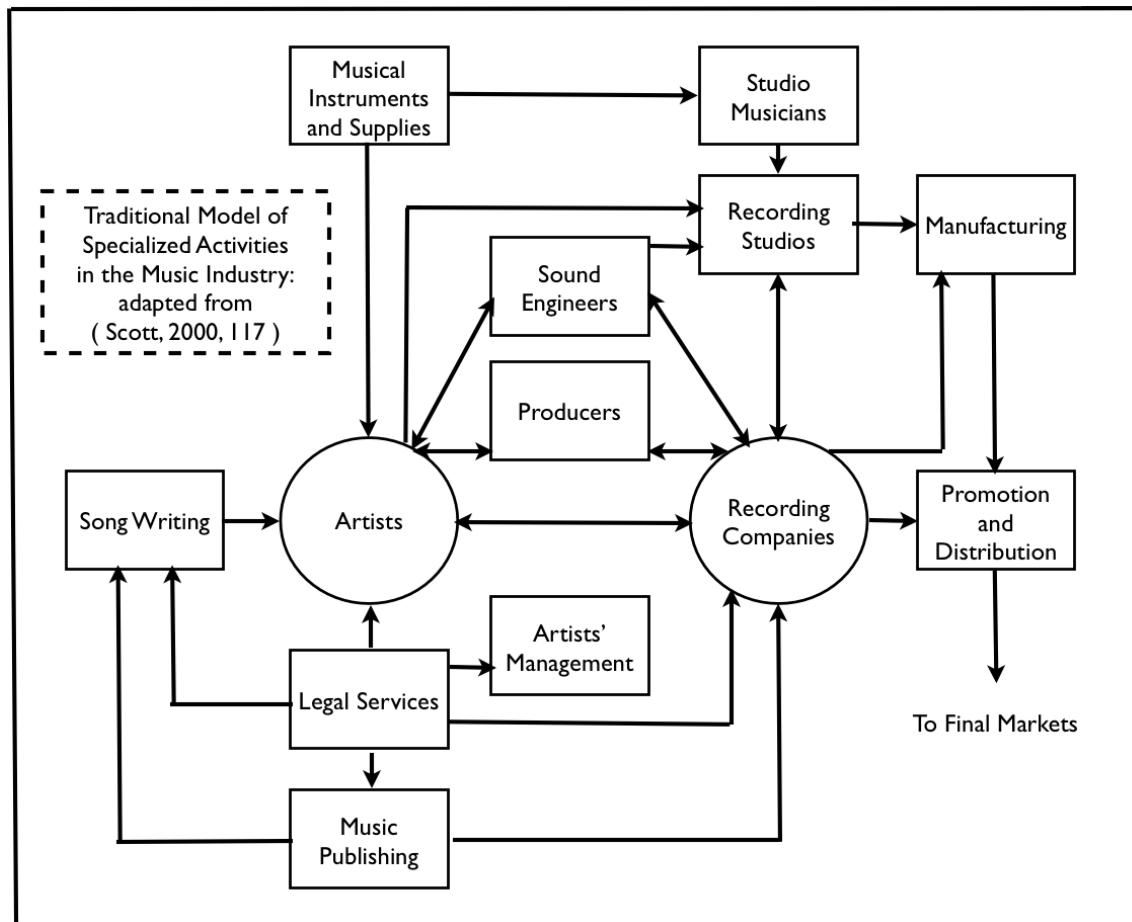
Structurally, the majors were vertically integrated multinationals, controlling every aspect of the production process ‘in-house’. As figure 2.1 demonstrates, the majors combined the commissioning and contracting of artists with their own recording studios. These large conglomerates possessed the technologies needed to press and package records, and had a sophisticated marketing, promotion and distribution networks, which operated worldwide. Moreover, a variety of specialized services, including legal services, music publishing, production, sound engineering, and management were also housed within divisions of the major record labels. Musicians signed to recording contracts advanced their careers on the basis of their creative abilities and were not required to possess technical, managerial, legal, or entrepreneurial skills.

Spatially, there was a high degree of concentration of music infrastructure, musicians and music professionals near the major labels (Leyshon 2009). As individual musicians lacked the financial resources and technical skills to record independently, they were dependent on the major labels and thus tied spatially to New York, Los Angeles and Nashville. Under the major label model of music production, individual musicians signed to recording contracts enjoyed job security. In addition, their label provided a host of financial,

¹⁷ In 2004 Sony and Bertelsmann AG (BMG) entered into a 50-50 merger (Sony BMG) which means that there are currently only four major music companies

technical and business resources. However, in signing a contract, musicians relinquished their autonomy. Indeed, signed musicians had to work within the confines of the creative vision developed by their label. Musicians were required to work when and how the label wanted them to, and live or spend much of their time, near their major label in New York, Los Angeles or Nashville.¹⁸

Figure 2.1: The Traditional Model of Services Controlled by the Majors



By 1997, the five majors reached the height of their dominance. Between 1987 and 1997, for example, U.S. domestic sales increased by 160% (Scott 2000). Sales by the majors

¹⁸ According to Allen et al. (2001) conventional recording contracts during the 1990's featured exclusive and binding relationships between musicians and major labels. Over the course of the contract, which lasted 7 or 8 albums, musicians enjoyed job security and a consistent 14% share of royalties from record sales (after the label recouped all expenses of course). To obtain this security, however, the authors note that musicians relinquished near total creative control to their label who then decided what songs to record, what producer to use, what studio to record in, what art work to use and how to package, promote and distribute each album.

accounted for over 90% of the total domestic sales in the United States, and between 70% and 80% of worldwide sales (Scott 2000; Brown et al. 2000). With total domestic sales in the United States topping \$12.2 billion in 1997, the recorded music sector stood on top of the entertainment pyramid, surpassing domestic sales in the motion picture industry, as well as DVDs, video games and the Internet (Scott 2000).¹⁹

Until 1997, the music industry also enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with technology whereby the music industry evolved in lockstep with a range of technological advances. These technological advancements, including the development of vinyl, magnetic audiotape and compact discs, were beneficial to the industry, with consumer electronic companies, such as Sony, creating new markets for reproductive equipment, and the majors being able to mine their back catalogues, selling old recordings in a range of new formats. In fact, up until the development of the MP3, the majors welcomed technological innovations as opportunities to re-sell the same music over and over again with higher profits (Leyshon 2001). The majors, for example, aggressively promoted the integration of new formats such as the CD because they could simultaneously decrease the production cost and increase the consumer price, which resulted in much higher profit-margins (McLeod 2005).

2.3 The Rise of Digital Technologies and the ‘MP3 Crisis’

As the world connected to the ‘information super-highway’ and the music industry came face-to-face with the MP3, the virtuous circle of growth was radically altered. When the MP3, a software program called MPEG-I Audio Layer 3, was developed in 1992 and introduced by the Motion Pictures Expert Group of the International Standards Organization (ISO), its main purpose was to standardize pictures and audio files in order to

¹⁹ Although it is difficult to find accounts that comprehensively document the specifics, the period between 1978 and 1997 might be referred to as the ‘Golden Era’ for the majors. Indeed, during this period the majors enjoyed economic success, a powerful position when bargaining with signed musicians and a positive relationship with technology.

facilitate international exchanges by the television industry (Leyshon 2001). Beyond this function, the revolutionary feature of the MP3 was its size. Requiring one-tenth the storage space per minute of sound that CDs do, MP3's could be downloaded through even 'narrow band' Internet connections. Moreover, the standardized nature of MP3 sound files meant that they could be downloaded without advanced or expensive equipment to any personal computer in less than ten minutes (Leyshon 2001).²⁰

During this period of transition, before nation states and firms began imposing legal regulations on file sharing networks and individuals, the Internet facilitated the development of a series of 'gift economies' occupied by enthusiasts who exchanged digital commodities, including image, movie and sound files, across Internet relay chat (IRC) networks.²¹ The best-known example of these networks is Napster, which was developed in 1999 by Shaun Fanning, a computer science drop-out. According to Leyshon (2003), by 2000 Napster had over 500,000 people logging in sharing copyrighted music files at any time. Moreover, by 2001 Napster had attracted over 60 million users without any advertising (Leyshon 2003).

As the pace of exchanging copyrighted music over the Internet accelerated, in the next few years, the music industry's lack of technological foresight, strategic planning and its inability to implement an effective response plunged the industry into an unprecedented economic crisis. Global music industry sales fell by 5% in 2001 and then a further 9% in 2002. For an industry that typically enjoyed year-over-year sales growth, this reversal had serious consequences. Many leading firms suffered, including Seagram/Universal who recorded a staggering \$12 billion loss for the first nine months of 2002 (Leyshon et al. 2005). In Canada, a survey released by Statistics Canada revealed that the Canadian music

²⁰ With the high-speed and relatively cheap broadband Internet connections of today, downloading the same 3MB song can take as little as 30 seconds.

²¹ For a review of these 'gift economies' see Leyshon (2003).

recording industry witnessed a sharp decline between 2000 and 2003, with revenues dropping by 17.7% (Carniol 2005). Moreover, internal research by the Canadian Recording Industry Association revealed a 40% decline in consumer spending after the rise of the MP3, from \$1.4 billion in 1998 to \$850 million in 2004 (Carniol 2005).

In a recent article, Leyshon (2009) updates his analysis of file sharing and the impact of the MP3-crisis on recording studios in the U.K.. Crucially, he argues that the scale and scope of illegal downloading has accelerated rapidly in recent years and now dwarfs the legal sale of recorded music in both physical and digital formats. Leyshon (2009: 1311) writes,

As long ago as 2003 the top-ten peer-to-peer (P2P) download program systems that facilitate the illegal downloading of music had themselves been downloaded more than 640 million times, and it is estimated that 2.3 billion files are downloaded across these networks every month. For example, consider one of the most successful of these networks, Kazaa; by 2006 it had been downloaded more than 239 million times, commanded a user base of over 140 million computer users, which was more than double that of Napster at its peak, with as many as four million users simultaneously online at any time. The availability of so much copyrighted material on sites such as this, for which no fee is received, has created an environment, which poses a significant threat to the musical economy.

To what extent was downloading the cause of this crisis? While the media and major labels blamed file sharing almost exclusively, Leyshon et al. (2005) argue that file sharing was merely a 'tipping point' and that in fact the cause of the downturn extended to other factors, such as changing consumer tastes, and the rise of entertainment alternatives like DVDs, video games, cell phones and the Internet itself, which compete for the disposable income and time individuals spend on music. As Leyshon et al. (2005: 184) note:

There is evidence to suggest that, for a number of reasons, the ability of music to command the disposable income of those between the ages of 14 and 24 is ebbing away rapidly. The most simple explanation for this is that other, newer, media and consumer electronics industries have begun to compete for this market segment, so that the amount of money young people have to spend on music has been reduced accordingly. New passions, be it computer games, mobile (cell) phones or even the

Internet itself, have all attracted expenditure that, in many cases, was previously spent on music.

Moreover, Grant and Wood (2004) contend that the ongoing corporate and geographic concentration of the music industry was leading to a reliance on formulaic A&R (artist and repertoire) processes and an ongoing trend whereby the majors were signing fewer new musical artists and focusing promotion and resources on a declining number of top-selling artists. This resulted in a declining level of musical creativity and diversity.

When file sharing made music free, money that was previously spent on music was diverted to other entertainment alternatives. While this influx contributed to the growth of nascent industries such as video games, the amount of time people spent listening to music actually increased. As an executive at a major label in Canada explained,

music never really directly competed with video games and the Internet and DVDs at their current level on even terms. Because in the mid-90s when people still had to pay for music, those other alternatives were not heavily developed. So it really wasn't a competition. Now those alternatives are much more developed, but music is handicapped. Let's think about it. You have two nascent industries that are elbowing their way into the entertainment market, video games and DVDs. Actually the Internet itself counts as well but in the mid-90s nobody used the Internet for fun because it was too slow. So these other things are elbowing their way in, the video games in particular. But it assumes that there is an inelastic dollar, that Joe consumer is going to spend \$1000 every year. Everybody is thinking 'I have to get a part of that \$1000 pie'. Can you imagine the excitement of these other industries when they realize that people are no longer going to have to pay for music? That the whole piece of the pie could go to other industries? Now the \$300 that was going to be spent on music becomes available for things like video games. So no wonder there has been explosive growth... Now what is interesting is that when we ask people why they are buying less music, 28% less in the latest study we did, they say because they can get it for free. They are not listening to less music or less interested in music. In fact, with MP3 players people are spending more hours of the day listening to and consuming music. But they are spending less on music and more on entertainment alternatives and this has had a huge impact (Interview).

Sufficient evidence does not exist to definitively determine the cause of the downturn, but it is clear that a confluence of factors led to the crisis, including, but not limited to, the growth of file sharing technologies. As Leyshon notes, the music industry

“was already struggling and on the verge of crisis. Internet piracy has legitimised the talk of a crisis of reproduction within the music industry” (2009, 1312).

While file sharing became popular under Napster, it was not until inexpensive high-speed broadband Internet connections were available to a much wider group of consumers that file sharing crippled CD sales. There was, therefore, a critical window of time in which the majors could develop and execute a damage control strategy to maintain their position of power within the market for music. Contrary to popular opinion, the majors were aware of the threat and acted to find a solution to the growing spectre of file sharing. However, their response was too slow and ultimately ineffective. According to an executive with Universal Music Canada, who was working with the company’s e-commerce division in late-1999 and early-2000, Universal had a two-fold response to file sharing: to stop illegal file sharing by engaging in litigation against Napster and Kazaa, and more importantly, to develop and deliver a high quality legal alternative to the market (Interview). In theory, this plan had the potential to bring consumers back to the market, but in practice a series of technical, logistical, and strategic problems limited the effectiveness of the plan, and instead exacerbated the crisis.

As one example, there were numerous difficulties associated with the creation of a legal system of online music distribution. While Napster facilitated the exchange of files of all formats and levels of quality, the majors needed to find the original ‘masters’ and digitize them in high quality audio formats before they could be sold online. This proved to be a difficult and time-consuming endeavor. Another delay ensued when the majors considered whether or not the current record contracts with artists allowed them to even do this. Once these hurdles were cleared, the majors had to construct complex royalty systems.

They also had to figure out how to organize transactions. As an executive at a major label in Canada explained,

We were trying to meet with people, credit card companies and others, who would process micro-transactions. They looked at transactions under a dollar and they laughed at us. Things like PayPal, that people use all the time today, they didn't exist then. (Interview)

Furthermore, while digital products in the U.S. were not taxable, in Canada the systems had to accommodate the collection of federal and provincial sales tax. All of this development took time, and although the plan was to get Universal's online system up and running by September of 2000, it took much longer than expected. Indeed, 'Puretracks', a Canadian online music store, did not officially open in Canada until October of 2003. The delays, however, were necessary, because as this major label executive put it, the majors could not skip steps, "We had to pay people. Imagine if we put out our artists' product without arrangements to pay them? We would be as bad as Napster was" (Interview).

If the majors had delivered a legal and consumer friendly system to the market in the first few years of transition, the crisis might have been minimized, but the second problem was that the majors, through poor strategic planning, alienated their customers, further pushing them towards the black market. This alienation came from two sources.

First, after focusing legal action on actors like Napster and Kazaa, the majors expanded their focus to include individual consumers. By prosecuting consumers for stealing copyrighted music, the majors pushed away the markets they hoped to bring back with their online models of distribution.

Second, the majors had two options with regard to how consumers would buy music, a subscription model where consumers would pay a monthly fee to essentially 'rent' online music, or the pay-per-song model where consumers would buy and 'own' individual

songs. Described by interview respondents as a 'fateful fork in the road', the majors chose the subscription model. In retrospect, online music stores using the subscription model failed because they did not mimic what was in the marketplace and provide consumers with the products they demanded in a style that they were used to. As a major label executive explained, "The thing in our acquisitive society is that the downloaders want something, they want the downloaded object, they want the file" (Interview). Consumers were outraged to learn that they could not keep the music they had purchased, and some of the majors, like BMG, made matters worse by introducing limitations on purchased CDs. They created built in programs that restricted users from copying music from CDs to computers. The backlash against the majors paved the way for other firms to enter the market. In particular, Apple, adopted the pay-per-song model of distribution and leveraged its online platforms, company brand name and line of MP3 players (iPods) to make its iTunes music store the market leader. Thus it is clear that technological changes presented fundamental challenges to the major record labels and that they failed to successfully adapt to this altered landscape. It is also clear that the crisis had implications for traditional models of retailing and distribution, which in turn impacted the majors further.

2.4 The Post-Crisis Restructuring of Music Retailing

At the height of their power, the major record labels, through a combination of market power and vertical integration, dictated the terms of marketing and distribution to less powerful retailers, which were dependent on the sale of recorded music. As file sharing eroded the power of the majors and wiped out these music retailers, new distribution channels, firms and power relations began to emerge. This section outlines the rise of online music distribution such as Apple's iTunes music store, the replacement of specialized music retailers, such as Tower Records, with diversified retailing giants such as Wal-Mart

and the implications of this shift on major labels. In particular, I argue that as the majors lose control of distribution, they also lose control over the production process of music itself.

As noted, in the United States, the vast majority of recorded music has traditionally been distributed by the majors, which own their own distribution networks, or alternatively by independents that distribute music through the networks of the major which owns them. The vertically integrated nature of the majors allowed them to blend sales, marketing and physical distribution in a strategic way to increase profits, while being flexible to market demands (Power and Hallencreutz 2005). Prior to the crisis, the retailers consisted of large chain stores like HMV and Tower Records, which operated in many cities and countries, as well as an array of local independent 'record shops'. Dependent on the sale of music, the larger retailers were completely subservient to the majors who dictated what music was to be sold and for what price. Before the crisis, therefore, the majors held the power, but in the turbulent times that followed, this streamlined structure of music distribution would be transformed and the majors would be forced to cede their power to a new breed of retailers.

As the practice of downloading 'free' music over the Internet started to snowball, and the aforementioned market trends served to slow music sales even further, the major labels lost billions of dollars, but the traditional retailers, who failed to react and diversify their product offerings, bore the brunt of the crisis. In the United States, for example, it was reported that approximately, 1200 music retailers closed down between 2000 and 2003 (Power and Hallencreutz 2005). Retailing giants such as Tower Records and Warehouse Entertainment, for example, declared bankruptcy in 2002 and 2003 and closed 160 and 120 stores respectively (Fox 2005).

Against this backdrop of change it is useful to consider how the physical and virtual landscape of music retailing has changed in recent years and the extent to which market power has been redistributed. The first consequence of the crisis, with respect to retailing, was the legal regulation and commercialization of file sharing networks and the emergence of online music e-tailers. When the majors finally mounted a response to the crisis, it took the form of intense legal pressure to have file sharing networks and the practice of sharing copyrighted music vilified in the media and declared illegal by European and North American courts.

As the most visible threat, Napster was targeted by the major labels and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for contributing to vicarious copyright infringement and encouraging the downloading of pirated songs and illegal files. By 2001, Napster had lost the legal battle and its 'underground' appeal. It was ordered to remove all copyrighted material from its system.

However, other file sharing platforms such as Audio Galaxy and Kazaa emerged to fill the void. Unlike Napster, however, the operations of these new file sharing networks are geographically fragmented across different regulatory spaces, making the task of legal authorities more difficult. Kazaa, for example, has servers based in Denmark. The software is programmed in Estonia. The domain name is registered in Australia, and the company that now owns the network, Sharman Networks, is registered in the 'no names given' Pacific tax haven of Vanuatu (Leyshon et al. 2005). Although the RIAA continued to level legal action against file-sharing networks, the majors came to the increasing realization that they could not beat them.

Having undertaken market research that indicated that 80% of Napster users would be prepared to pay a \$15 monthly fee to use the system, BMG entered into an alliance

with Napster to convert the system into a fee based subscription service. BMG subsequently made its entire catalog available to Napster users, who could still enjoy the features and convenience of the 'legalized' Napster experience (Leyshon et al. 2005). To further leverage its ability to produce music and electronic devices which play digital music formats, Sony also decided to jump into the online distribution game in 2004 when it launched its download service called 'Connect' (Bockstedt et al. 2006).

Despite the number of online music distribution channels and business models which have emerged in recent years, Apple's iTunes online music store and its 'pay-per-song' model has become the unrivaled market leader in North America. The iTunes music store currently offers over 11 million songs, which can be downloaded over any Internet connection to users with computers running Macintosh or Windows operating systems. The average price per song is \$.99²² and once the songs have been purchased they can be played on up to five computers, burned to a CD, and downloaded to portable (MP3) players, without violating any copyright or piracy laws (Allison 2004, 50).²³ Between its introduction in April 2003 and February 2010, Apple has sold over 10 billion songs through its iTunes music store (Luttrell 2010). Moreover, as of August 2009, Apple accounted for 25% of the overall music market – both physical and digital – and 69% of the digital market (Whitney 2009).

In the early 2000's, many industry executives believed that the apocalyptic mix of blank CDs and Napster would make traditional 'bricks and mortar' record shops extinct within 12 months. More recently, in 2004, the rise of e-tailing was referred to as having a 'neutron-bomb effect' (Fox 2005). It was estimated that, in less than a decade, online music

²² Apple has recently introduced variable pricing, which allows a popular song to be sold for \$1.29 and less popular and older songs to be sold for \$.69 (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/what-is/>)

²³ Unlike the majors who have entered into the online world of e-tailing to ensure that they are paid for their copyrighted music, Apple launched iTunes and began selling music to further popularize its line of iPod MP3 players.

sites such as Apple's iTunes, BMG's Napster and Sony's Connect would empty the aisles of Virgin and HMV Mega-stores (Fox 2005). In retrospect, these claims can be considered exaggerated. Indeed, although many of the traditional 'bricks and mortar' retailers have disappeared, they have been replaced by a new breed of diversified, logistically advanced and financially stable 'big-box' chains such as Wal-Mart, Costco and Best Buy.

In 2003, the RIAA reported that 'bricks and mortar' stores still accounted for 86% of music sales for that year (Fox 2005). In August of 2009, however, this figure had dropped to 65% (Whitney 2009). While the market share of music sales for traditional record shops has declined from 71% in 1989 to 33% in 2003, the 'big-box' stores have quickly taken over (Fox 2005). With over 3,617 stores in the U.S., in 2005, and another 1,603 around the world, Wal-Mart has become the market leader in U.S. music sales, accounting for over 20% of total sales (Fox 2005). Moreover, when Musicland declared bankruptcy and sold its 1,300 retail stores in 2001, Best Buy seized the opportunity to establish itself as an entertainment and electronics giant, swooping in to purchase each store for approximately \$685 million (Fox 2005).

2.5 The Post-Crisis Redistribution of Power

As a consequence of this restructuring, the majors no longer dictate the terms of content, pricing and distribution, but rather take direction from the new and more dominant players on the distribution side. e-tailers such as Apple and Amazon and diversified chain stores such as Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Costco now dominate.

During the pre-crisis years, the size of the majors and their strong control over the distribution process allowed them to dictate the terms of cultural production. The majors developed marketing, placement and pricing strategies, which were forced upon their subsidiaries, as well as retailers. Put simply, the majors told the retailers what music titles to

sell and at what price, and if the majors wanted posters and music of a specific recording artist or group to be in the front window of every North American record shop, it was only a matter of a few phone calls. As retailing power has been consolidated into the hands of a few large chain stores, the majors are increasingly taking their cues from the retailers. This fundamental shift has had important consequences for the pricing structure of music and the styles of music which are being produced. The key difference between traditional and new retailers is product diversity. Tower Records went out of business because it sold music exclusively. Wal-Mart thrives because it receives small profit margins on thousands of consumer goods. As music has become one of a growing range of products now being sold, 'big-box' retailers frequently use music and DVDs as loss-leader goods, meaning that they sell the goods below-cost in order to attract new customers and obtain revenue on other (typically more costly) items (Fox 2005, 505). By selling songs for \$.99, which is often below-cost, Apple is also engaging in loss-leader pricing, sacrificing profits on the sale of music, to promote the sales of more expensive items like iPods and computers (McLeod 2005).

On the surface, the ability of online music stores, like iTunes, to offer millions of titles seems to be counteracting the homogenization of music at 'bricks and mortar' stores, but in reality these e-tailers are further contributing to the process. Although consumers have the opportunity to search for and download music from fringe genres, the iTunes store heavily promotes the same top-40 hit singles that are played endlessly on the radio and found on the shelves of the 'big-box' retailers. Moreover, with the 'pay-per-song' model, iTunes privileges the purchase of hit singles over entire albums, which further promotes the popularity of a narrow range of the most marketed and visible (music video) songs. At the level of mainstream cultural production, an increasingly narrow range of commercially viable

'top 40' music is being demanded, produced, marketed and distributed. This shift has had a profound impact on the major labels and individual musicians.

2.6 The Consequences of 'Picking Winners'

In the post-crisis marketplace the majors face mounting pressure to sign popular musical acts and manufacture hit songs. On one hand, the increasingly powerful retailers, such as Wal-Mart and Apple, need hit songs and albums to fuel their loss-leader pricing strategies. On the other hand, the economic downturn has eroded the capital resources of the major labels and their ability to take risks on anything but commercially viable music and musical acts. While the traditional formula involved signing a high number of promising musical acts across a range of genres, in the hopes that a few commercial successes would pay for the failures, major labels have become much more risk averse and formulaic. As a result, one significant response of the major labels to the MP3-crisis, has been to reduce risk and focus on 'hit-makers.' In the wake of the downturn, the major labels terminated many existing record contracts and instead focused their resources on a small number of established and commercially viable musical acts, or 'Cadillacs,' such as Bruce Springsteen and Celine Dion.²⁴ Moreover, there has been a reduction in new contracts and those who are signed must be instantly recognizable to the market. As one major label executive explains, the majors are trying to reduce risk by looking for proven musical commodities,

In general the record company is being more careful with its money... We do profit and loss statements. You see a band you like. You compare it to other bands that are similar in some ways and you look at what those bands have done in a similar marketplace and you track that. For example, there is a new band that is very similar to Avril Lavigne [and] Alanis Morissette. Then you [think] those are the two records that this [new band] sounds the most like. [Because the new band] would go to the same demographics we would do a similar marketing campaign. So you [can] look at those numbers and estimate how the new band will do. Major record companies are

²⁴ The decision of the major labels to 'scale back' capital outlays and flexibilize labour inputs in response to the economic downturn is very similar to the forms of restructuring described by Christopherson (2002b) and Ekinsmyth (2002).

very single driven. [Our] best allies are radio and television, so we're looking for songs that work well in that format. (Interview)

Throughout the process of restructuring, the major labels are going beyond just picking winners to reduce costs and risk. Indeed, the major labels have scaled back the level and comprehensiveness of the services and support they provide to recording artists. While musicians traditionally produced and distributed demo tapes to the majors in the hopes of getting 'signed', musicians in some cases now have to produce and distribute several albums 'independently', before a major will sign them. Moreover, as Grant and Wood (2004) point out, once signed, musicians must be commercially successful or the majors 'will drop' them immediately. The major labels have become more risk averse and less concerned about developing musical talent. As one record label executive argues,

Why should the record company go out there and find a raw talent and walk them through all the steps in the whole process?... It is a much less risky proposition to take established talent or somewhat established talent than completely raw talent. (Interview)

Leyshon (2009, 1327) argues that as major labels scale back their involvement in discovering and developing new talent, they are transitioning from being music producers to acting as brand-led marketing companies. As a result, the risk of talent development has been downloaded from the major labels to the artists themselves. As another record label executive indicates, even 'signed' musicians need to know how to do things themselves,

The onus is more than ever on the individual to actually do it themselves... Under the old system, you get picked up, put in a studio and you just have to be creative and express the music. But now, I'm going to be honest, even as a major label, I am not interested in getting into business with individuals who don't know how to do these things themselves, how to market themselves, how to book shows, because it is very difficult and it is very competitive. (Interview)

Or as this executive at the Canadian Independent Recording Artists' Association puts it,

The majors are more interested in the finished product instead of the developmental process...Over the past several years, in particular, the whole artist development role

of the label has rapidly dwindled away. Labels are not willing to take the same kind of risks or invest the same kind of time to develop an act, and to build an audience. They're looking for ready-made products. (Interview)

As the major labels withdraw from talent development and fewer individual musicians seek or obtain recording contracts, the transition from the traditional model of major label music production to a technologically driven alternative becomes more widespread. As the responsibility for development has been downloaded to individual musicians, it seems logical that the alternative is independent production.²⁵ While independent production has existed as a niche alternative to the major labels for over 30 years, it is taking new forms in the contemporary period.²⁶

2.7 Technology Makes Independent Music Production Viable

In the current period, the significance of independent music production has increased and it is now the dominant form. As this musician explains,

In the early 1980s, being an independent musician was a choice. Some people didn't want to work towards a major label deal because there were restrictions and conditions attached to that...Now very few artists can still get signed to major label deals, so the majority of artists end up on the independent side. (Interview)

In fact, according to the Canadian Independent Recording Artist Association (CIRAA), the declining number of recording contracts has left over 95% of all musicians in Canada without major or independent label affiliation, making them by definition, independent.²⁷ How does contemporary independent music production differ from its

²⁵ Under independent music production musicians do not sign recording contracts with major or indie record labels. Instead, they assume full responsibility for the development process and perform the entire range of tasks associated with music production individually.

²⁶ Although it is tempting to view the 'MP3 Crisis' as a historical turning point or industrial divide which signals the shift from a Fordist to post-Fordist regime of music production, the evidence suggests that the changes in the industry are more complex. In many respects, the structures and imperatives of contemporary independent music production are incongruent with post-Fordist models of production. As I outline, for example, independent musicians are not specializing but rather multi-skilling. In addition, instead of coming together under the umbrella of a post-Fordist artisan democracy, independent musicians are being pit against one another (Amin 1995). Moreover, the major labels appear to be responding to the crisis by refining their existing Fordist systems (Gertler 1988). As a result of these contradictions, the analysis presented in this chapter does not consider restructuring within the context of post-Fordism.

²⁷ It is important to point out that independent music production is the dominant model in terms of the number of music producers not revenue. Based on revenue, the major label model of production is still the most significant. However, as the focus of this thesis is on the nature of work, I focus on the model in which the majority of individuals operate.

previous incarnations? According to musicians with first hand experience, traditional indie production was really an ad-hoc system with inherent limitations. Musicians have always been able to create music on their own, writing and performing songs, but the recording, manufacturing, marketing and distribution of these songs required capital and skills beyond the grasp of most individual musicians. As this musician points out, even basic recording and production required money and specialized music professionals,

There was a book that came out in the late 1970s called 'How to Make and Sell your own Record.' That was...the Bible, and it is still available. But you still had to raise money. You had to raise at least \$10,000. You still had to go into a recording studio and hire some engineers and producers who had the technical skills. The equipment was a lot less accessible because of the cost of it and it was very difficult to operate. You couldn't operate the recording equipment in his studio yourself. Most people couldn't, because you needed specialized knowledge for that. So at the time you had to go somewhere, and pay people to use the machines for you. (Interview)

Moreover, at this time, short of selling these albums on street corners and after live performances, indie musicians had no way to market and distribute their music on their own. Distribution deals existed with major and indie labels, but the resources and technology did not yet exist for true indie production across the production to distribution chain.

In the current period, however, this landscape has changed. The introduction and development of digital technologies have finally given indie musicians the tools to be truly independent. Recording can now be done in home studios with personal computers, which has reduced the cost of recording so that it is accessible to musicians with low incomes. Moreover, with professional and even consumer software, recording, editing, mixing and mastering digitally recorded music has become easy enough for a much larger number of musicians to do on their own. As this musician explains,

As digital technology developed... things became more affordable. \$3000 will buy you a really good computer, software, a bunch of equipment and way more tracks, so

you can do multi-track recording and all that kind of stuff. So I think...it made recording more affordable. More people are able to do it on their own. People became less dependent on the label deal, or the big-money contracts. You didn't have to sell your soul for that \$20,000 to make the record or whatever. You can actually do whatever you wanted at home by yourself. (Interview)

In effect, digital technologies have democratized the production of music by making traditionally expensive and specialized activities accessible to a much wider range of musicians (Leyshon 2009). As this musician argues, technology has had a 'flattening effect':

There have been a number of radical shifts, which are technology related, if not technology driven. So the recording role is the one that has changed the most. Now, anybody who owns a computer is a producer and engineer but it wasn't very long ago that being a record producer was a very specialized, very high-end field of work where you had to have hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in gear just to do the work. There still are people who do that but the bar has been dropped so much lower in terms of who can do that. To some extent that has a real flattening effect on what kind of money is involved in that. (Interview)

These developments have removed the two traditional barriers of cost and skill, but new technology, specifically the Internet, has also allowed musicians for the first time to market and distribute their music independently. Musicians can now cheaply and easily set up websites to promote and distribute digitally recorded music tracks in MP3 format. As this musician puts it,

I think MySpace is a great music resource for musicians because it puts everything in your hands. Within an hour you can set up everything, a profile for your band, add songs that people can listen to, send messages, send out updates about upcoming shows. (Interview)

Furthermore, the same tracks can be licensed and distributed directly through Apple's iTunes online music store, which inserts indie musicians directly into the chain of global distribution for the first time. So in terms of barriers to entry, new digital technologies have had a tremendous flattening effect on the industry and allowed a much higher number of musicians to enter the industry and function as independent producers. As this musician explains,

We have two albums and if people hear us on My Space they can go to iTunes and buy it. We got ourselves on iTunes through a distribution deal through 'Blue Pie'. They put our stuff on there and at \$10 a CD we keep 60% of it. We have sold close to 100 albums on iTunes...but surprisingly it is not only people from Toronto buying but from all across the world. The majority of sales are actually coming from Europe. (Interview)

Technology has not only served to free musicians from the support of major labels but has also created a new geography of music production, one in which musicians are no longer tied to the established centres of music production in New York, Los Angeles and Nashville. While many indie and signed musicians still choose to live and work in these cities, technology has made it possible to produce, market and distribute music from anywhere. Or as this music producer argues,

I would agree that musicians are no longer tied as they once were to the major centres of music production and the major labels...Now you can make music from anywhere, even the far north. Last summer I was up in Moose Factory. We did a gig out there in an aboriginal community and we met some people that have a little studio and [are] recording music in their basement. Because they have the Internet, they don't have to go to a city or a major centre to record or to distribute their music to the world. (Interview)

These examples demonstrate how technology serves to democratize the music industry by lowering entry barriers and redistributing power. Indeed, technology makes music production cheaper and more accessible, while also allowing musicians to venture for the first time into the realm of marketing and distribution at the global scale. As a result, technology affords individual musicians unprecedented structural and spatial freedom. The question that arises, however, is what implications does this have for the nature of work? In the next section I examine the widening array of tasks – both creative and non-creative – that are involved in independent music production.

2.8 From Artist to Entrepreneur: Working as an Independent Musician

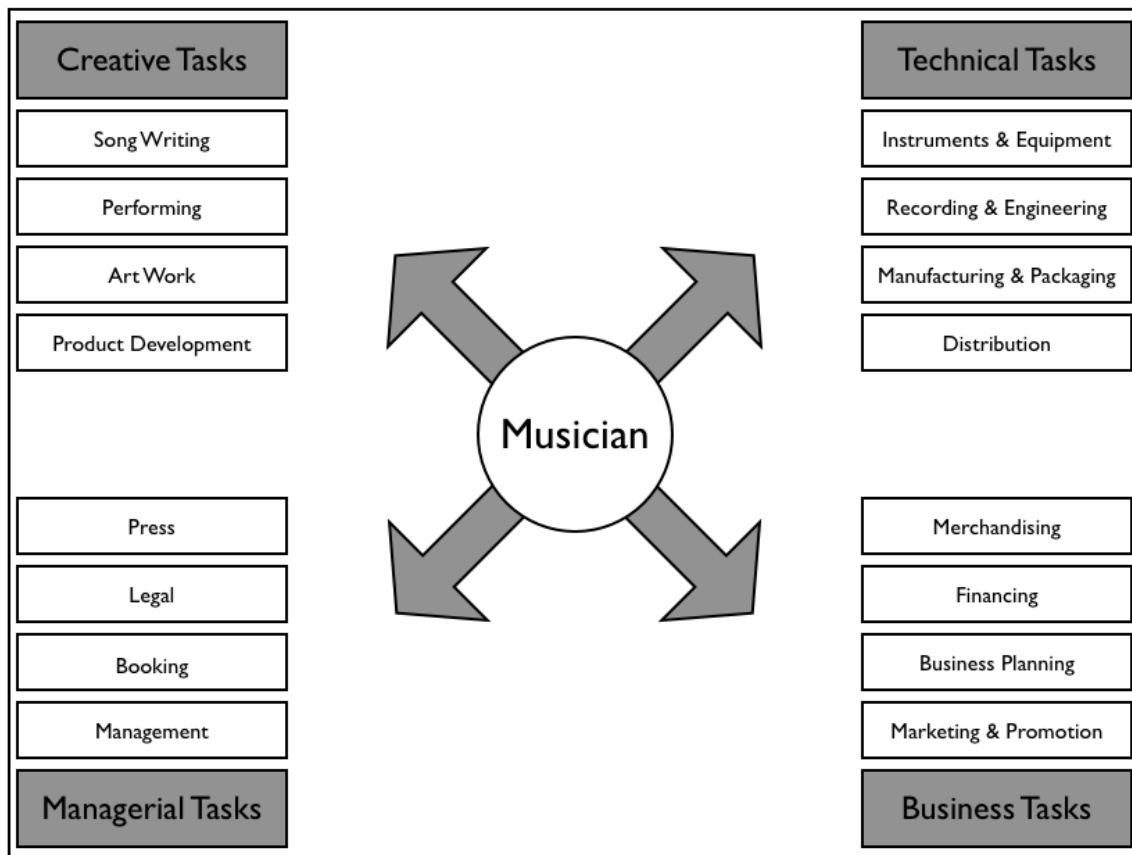
So far attention has been paid to how technology has restructured the music industry and transformed independent music production from a niche market to a mainstream model of music production. In this section, I describe the changing nature of work in independent music production. In particular, I argue that indie musicians are now required to perform a wider variety of tasks. This constitutes a fundamental shift in the working lives of musicians who, under the major label model of music production, allocated the majority of their time to performing creative tasks such as song writing, recording and performing. Under the independent model of music production, musicians are now responsible for non-creative tasks as well. As this musician explains,

If you actually want to make a living as an indie musician, it is a tough go. You've got to pretty much do it yourself all the way through. You have to be able to play your instruments well, write songs, but you also have to be able to get out of the basement and perform them...You also have to be a booking agent...You have to be a manager, setting up interviews and getting the word out...You also have to raise money and get financing together to do some recording, so that means grant applications, going to the bank and putting together business plans and proposals...Plus there are all the technical skills that you need. How to put together a home studio, how to get good recordings, what is involved with recording and mixing and mastering...If you are going to put out an actual CD, then you need to have some kind of artwork with that as well. Marketing is another one getting lists of media that you can approach, radio stations and magazines, fanzines that you can send your music to for review, all that kind of stuff and promotion. Merchandising, maybe it is just going to be T-shirts, but often it is much more than that now, and these are all things that would be done for you by various people in big organizations if you were signed to a label, but now you have to do all of these things yourself...So musicians are now responsible for the whole range of activities, technical, business, performance and musicianship. You have to have it all together. (Interview)

The most obvious consequence of this shift is the redistribution of time and energy musicians can now afford to allocate to each task. Under the major label model, signed musicians spent the vast majority of their time seeking inspiration and being creative, but these activities have now been curtailed out of necessity. As the quote above illustrates, the

independent musicians in my sample are now working longer hours and devoting more time to non-creative tasks, such as booking shows, applying for grant money and promoting their music online.²⁸ Despite ‘working more,’ however, musicians are earning less money.²⁹ In this way the working lives of the contemporary independent musicians in my sample are moving away from ‘artist’ or ‘bohemian’ models of creative production to encompass a more entrepreneurial model.

Figure 2.2: The Creative and Non-Creative Tasks of Independent Music Production



²⁸ These figures are taken from Statistics Canada, catalogue number – 97-564-XCB2006005 (2006) and Catalogue Number – 97f0012xcb01050 (2001, 1996, 1991). The dollar amounts were converted to 2010 CDN\$ using inflation rates provided by the Bank of Canada.

²⁹ Using 2010 CDN\$, musicians in Toronto earned \$18,582 in 2001 and \$13,773 in 2006, which represents a decline of 26% (Statistics Canada 2008a 2008b).

This shift has broader implications for traditional understandings of artistic employment and creativity. As Greffe (2004, 88) points out, the shift from dependent to independent production presents the need for a revised understanding of the skills required for artistic production. As artists become entrepreneurs, new skills are required and artistic or creative skills must be paired with those of a legal expert, a financier, a manager and so on. Writing more critically about the changing experiences of indie fashion designers, McRobbie (2002a) describes these processes as de-specialization and multi-skilling, and argues that the shift to more entrepreneurial modes of creativity is eroding traditional notions of creativity.³⁰ As this musician argues, “It is a full-time job but only about 10% actually involves music. The rest of it is the marketing and the looking for work” (Interview).

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the changing structure of the music industry and the role of technology in restructuring the nature of work. The Post-crisis restructuring of the music industry and the rise of contemporary independent production generates new opportunities and new challenges for individual workers. Earlier I explained that within the major label system, signed musicians handed over creative, structural and spatial control to the major labels in exchange for support and security. Without record contracts, musicians have gained control and flexibility, but also increased risks.

On one hand, independent musicians now have complete creative control over the direction and content of their music and related products. They have autonomy over the way they work, and can now produce music virtually anywhere. Technology allows

³⁰ It is important to note the different connotations ‘de-skilling’ and ‘multi-skilling’ can have depending on occupation. Whereas McRobbie is critical of multi-skilling in the context of creative workers, there is a long-standing criticism of de-skilling in manufacturing dating back to Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). While allowing factory workers to perform more tasks may be a way to combat the monotonous and dehumanizing nature of the assembly line, my findings suggest that musicians prefer to focus on creative activities and, therefore, view the imposition of additional ‘non-creative’ tasks as a negative consequence of independent production.

musicians to enter the market and sell directly to consumers, and although sales of recorded music have declined in the era of file sharing and MP3 players, more music is being consumed than ever before. Indeed, the restructured music industry is full of opportunities for talented and ambitious musicians.

On the other hand, to realize these opportunities, musicians must first overcome a new and dynamic range of barriers to success. Respondents describe the current marketplace as the 'wild west', a place where the rules of the game have altered. Barriers to entering the market have been significantly lowered, but that market is fraught with uncertainty and above all competition. As one musician puts it, "The best thing about technology is that now anyone can make music but the worst thing is that now anyone can make music" (Interview).

In the next chapter I consider the ramifications of digital technologies for independent musicians. I argue that, as work has become more fragmented, it is also subject to higher levels of risk. Furthermore, there has been an individualization of risk.

Chapter 3

The Individualization of Employment Risk for Independent Musicians in Toronto

Individualization means, first, the disembedding and, second, the re-embedding of industrial society ways of life by new ones, in which the individuals must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves (Beck et al. 1994, 13).

3.1 Introduction

In the 'Risk Society' (1992) Beck argues that workers are becoming individualized as a result of the destandardization of work and the shift to the 'second modernity.' With traditional certainties of work and state supports disappearing, individuals are forced to become entrepreneurial subjects who construct their own biographies by negotiating a range of opportunities and risks. Several geographers have extended Beck's framework to explore the processes through which work is becoming fragmented contractually, spatially and temporally (Allen and Henry 1997; Reimer 1998; Ekinsmyth 1999; Christopherson 2002b). In contract services, such as cleaning, and cultural industries such as magazine publishing, for example, the fragmentation of work puts workers in precarious situations,³¹ intensifying their experience of uncertainty. Much of this literature examines the impact flexibility has on the employment experiences of individuals who work with firms, either directly employed by the firm or indirectly working for a firm. In this case, it is the flexibilization of firms that creates risk for workers (Ekinsmyth 2002). To date, however, little is known about the role technology plays in creating a process of individualization and risk for self-employed entrepreneurs who operate beyond the boundaries of the firm (Christopherson 2002b; Cranford and Vosko et al. 2003). In fact, although digital

³¹ Vosko (2006, 3) defines precarious employment as "forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and high risks of ill health. It is shaped by an employment status (i.e., self-employment or wage work), form of employment (i.e. temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time), and dimensions of labor market insecurity as well a social context (such as occupation, industry, and geography), and social location (interaction between social relations, such as gender and race and political and economic conditions)."

technologies have revolutionized entire industries, including music, and created others, such as new media, the implications of these developments for the nature of work remain largely unexplored. As a result, there is a need to examine the employment experiences of individuals who perform as entrepreneurs in the creative economy.

In this chapter I critically analyze the working lives of independent musicians in Toronto. I argue that by facilitating the rise of contemporary independent music production and reducing the value of music-related products in the marketplace, digital technologies have radically altered the structure of music employment. As a result of this restructuring, the working lives of contemporary independent musicians are becoming individualized and fragmented across time and space. This fragmentation creates conflicts for musicians who must choose between competing uses of their time, energies and resources. Therefore, although digital technologies have had a democratizing effect on the music industry, and musicians enjoy greater autonomy and creative freedom, I argue that the demands of independent music production constrain individual choice. Moreover, I assert that as neo-liberal regimes reconfigure independent musicians as entrepreneurial subjects, they are governed through their freedom and encouraged to conduct themselves according to the imperatives of economic rationality and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the fragmented and demanding nature of independent music production and entrepreneurial subjectivity, intensifies existing employment risk for individual musicians and introduces a range of new conflicts, insecurities and barriers to creativity.

The chapter is organized into seven sections. I begin by reviewing the ways in which the conventions and structures of employment have changed over time. In particular, I highlight the work of several geographers who argue that work is becoming fragmented with respect to contractual arrangements, temporal cycles and spatial distribution.

Stemming from this fragmentation I explain that the structures of work, as well as the decision making process of workers are becoming individualized as a result of the rise of more entrepreneurial subjectivities associated with neoliberal regimes. I then turn my attention to exploring the fragmentation, individualization and risk experienced by independent musicians in Toronto. I begin by outlining the competitive marketplace these workers operate within and demonstrate how the demands inherent within independent music production constrain the freedom and control individual musicians can exercise over their careers. I identify and examine three specific conflicts, which produce risk for musicians; the need to balance creative and business tasks, the need to balance music and non-music work, and the need to balance work with non-work. In the final section of the chapter I revisit the starting premise that digital technologies and independent music production provide unprecedented freedom to individual workers and conclude by illustrating that freedom and power are not opposites (Rose 1999).

3.2 The Risk Society

The conceptualization of risk in this chapter is based on the work of Ulrich Beck (1992 1994 2000). Beck defines risk “as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (1992, 21). To gain a more substantive understanding, however, it is helpful to begin with the shift from what Beck refers to as the ‘work society’ to the current ‘risk society’ and then consider the implications of this shift on the nature of work.

The ‘work society’ encompasses the traditional employment system, which reached its zenith during the height of Fordism. For Beck (1992) the quintessential feature of this system was the high degree of standardization, which produced certainty and security for workers. The majority of paid employment exhibited consistent contractual, spatial and

temporal structures. Beck notes, for example, that employment during this time followed standard contracts, which often involved collective bargaining and unionization (1992, 142). Moreover, regardless of sector, work tended to be spatially concentrated in large business organizations. Finally, the temporal dimensions of work emphasized life-long and full-time employment, often within the same firm. As the hours of work were largely standardized and scheduled around the traditional '9-5' workday, the work society constructed a clear delineation between work and non-work both spatially and temporally (Beck 1992, 142). Correspondingly, the majority of individuals in the work society could depend on steady incomes, standard work schedules, as well as health, employment and pension benefits provided by the state and employers.³²

According to Beck, since the 1970's, successive waves of automation have softened and frayed this standard employment relationship and introduced flexibility into contracts, worksites and working hours.³³ Thus, flexibilization has replaced standard employment relations with de-standardized and uncertain structures. As a result, the boundaries between work and non-work are becoming fluid and forms of underemployment are growing (1992, 142). Beck (2000: 77) argues that work is becoming more contractually fragmented, spatially decentralized and less visible,

The employment system that took shape in Europe over the past hundred years, partly through fierce social conflicts, rested upon a high degree of both temporal and spatial standardization of work contracts and labour deployment. With risk regulation,

³² In the Canadian context, Cranford and Vosko et al. (2003, 7) explain that "The standard employment relationship emerged as the dominant model of employment in the post-World War II period. It resulted from a state mediated compromise between the predominately white male, industrial workers and their unions and employers in large workplaces shielded from the competitive pressures challenging many smaller firms. The standard employment relationship, however, never took hold for the predominantly women and immigrant workers in small and decentralized workplaces in the service and competitive manufacturing sectors. For these reasons, current labour market restructuring is resulting in more and more workers falling outside of the normative standard employment relationship. Work that differs from this model is commonly described as 'non-standard'."

³³ Christopherson (2002b, 2) defines flexibility "as the ability of firms to adjust labor inputs in response to changes in product and the volume of demand. Flexibility includes "numerical" adjustments, in the number of workers or working hours, and "functional" adjustments, in the application of work time to various tasks or the purchase of needed skills in the external labor market. It also includes the ability to adjust wages in response to changes in the supply of labor or the demand for skills. The flexibility of an economy is measured by such indicators as the degree of wage dispersion, the proportion of the workforce in numerically flexible jobs (part-time and temporary work contracts), the extent of subcontracted inputs to the production process, and the rate of job turnover."

what is now developing is a destandardized, fragmented, plural, 'under employment' system, characterized by highly flexible, time intensive and spatially decentralized forms of deregulated paid labour. As a result, the boundaries between work and non-work are starting to blur, in respect of time, space and contractual content; paid work and unemployment are spread over larger spaces and therefore become less and less socially visible from positions on the margins. Instead of company-structured labour densely packed into skyscrapers and factories, a type of spatially diffuse corporate organization is appearing which, both outwardly and inwardly, can no longer be clearly defined in respect of markets, products, customers, workers, and entrepreneurs. The same is true of unemployment. It too is becoming invisible, as it 'seeps away' into the no man's land between employment and non-employment.

Crucially, Beck also hints at the role emerging technologies will play in facilitating the geographical diffusion of work functions and the rise in outsourcing and homework in particular (1992, 142).³⁴

In addition to contractual and spatial fragmentation, Beck (2002, 53) notes that paid employment is being 'chopped up' temporally and that the standard 9-5 workday is being extended. Thus, the layering and overlapping of work and domestic identities is blurring the formerly clear delineation between work and non-work (Perrons et al. 2006). As Jarvis and Pratt (2005: 7) argue,

In this context of course 'work' spans the whole economy: work–work, family–work, domestic–work and life–work. Any one or all of these might be conducted at home (either in an office which duplicates 'the office' or simply on a mobile phone), in a remote workplace or in transit. Inevitably, home also intrudes into work with parents having to make new arrangements 'on the fly', or to cope with home and school problems remotely...A further dimension is the pressure on individuals and companies to network strategically in order to remain competitive. This implies an extra work burden: the pressure to take part in the buzz of office, or post-office activity, or, the need to have 'face-time' with clients or remote co-workers. All of these activities place considerable burdens on individuals' time and invariably that of their household too.

³⁴ Although Beck (1992) attempts to extrapolate the ways in which technology will impact work in the future it is important to note one major limitation. As the original German version of 'Risk Society' was published in 1986 there was no way for Beck to imagine or adequately theorize the kinds of digital technologies, which have become regular fixtures in the contemporary workplace. This limitation lends further credence to need to update our understanding of how technology alters the structures, spaces and experience of work.

Thus, flexibilization creates both new opportunities and new forms of risk, which workers negotiate in an increasingly individualized way. As Beck (2000: 53) argues, de-standardization represents a double edge sword:

On the one hand, there is new freedom to shape and coordinate one's own work and one's own life; but on the other hand, new trapdoors can lead to exclusion, and the risks are shifted from the state and economy onto the shoulders of individuals. Both aspects are based on the new precariousness of work; the opportunities with the risks attached.

In the risk society, biographies are becoming reflexive and self-produced. More specifically, individuals, regardless of class and human capital, now engage in elective and do-it-yourself biography construction in an attempt to seize opportunities and minimize risk. Importantly, Beck (2000, 53), suggests that this reflexivity permeates the decision making of both work and domestic identities:

One of the most striking features of the second modernity is that paradoxically collective wish to live a life of one's own... Ever since the 1980s, but at accelerating speed in the 1990s, this individualization of life worlds has been compounded, overlaid and counteracted by an individualization of work.

In the risk society, uniformity has given way to decisions and conflict between alternatives with varying degrees of risk. Indeed, Beck (1992) stresses that any gains in freedom and sovereignty over ones' work are accompanied by the privatization of responsibility for the economic, social and physical risks associated with flexibility. The overarching feature of the risk society is the prevalence of risk and insecurity in every sphere (economic, political and social). The risk society is not optional in that individuals can choose or reject it. To the contrary, Beck argues that individualization is not based on the free decision of individuals. Rather people are condemned to reflexive and do-it-yourself biographies (Beck et al. 1994, 14).

Since the late-1990's economic geographers have contributed a number of important studies of employment risk, which have advanced our collective understanding of how work is being individualized (Allen and Henry 1997; Reimer 1998; Ekinsmyth 1999 2002; Leslie 2002). These studies address the experiences of unskilled workers, such as contract service workers who are employed as cleaners, caterers, and security guards (Allen and Henry 1997) and professionals who work freelance in magazine publishing (Ekinsmyth 1999).

Taken together, the findings provide a broad analysis of how work is being fragmented, contractually, spatially and temporally. As Allen and Henry (1997: 185) point out,

A prominent aspect of this shift has been a rise in the 'contractualization' of employment, whereby more and more people are employed on different contractual terms in respect of hours, benefits and entitlements. Alongside specific contracts in terms of working time, for example variable time or zero-hour contracts, differing combinations of wages, incentives and benefits are put together for different groups of workers. Whilst often described in the conventional language of flexibility, it is perhaps more accurate to refer to this 'individualization' of employment relations as a form of Taylorism.

For service workers, this contractualization creates uncertainty with respect to both income and the terms of work. As a consequence, multiple job holding is becoming a central feature of the risk society as 'low end' workers struggle to cobble together enough sources of income (Paxson and Sicherman 1996; Reimer 1998).

Allen and Henry also argue that employment risk is increased by the degree of arbitrariness with respect to obtaining and renewing contracts. As the authors (1997:187) note, in the service sector,

The workforce has no automatic right to re-employment. Individual workers are subject both to the will of the client who has put the work out to tender and to the discretion of the incoming contract management. It is not uncommon for contracts to change hands at short notice and for the contract workforce on site to be the last to

know of the event. At worse, the particularistic relationships between client and contract worker may be charged with sexist or racist overtones.

Similarly, Leslie argues that the inconsistent duration and availability of paid shifts in fashion retailing contributes to the stress, anxiety and the individualization of risk experienced by workers. Rather than being shared, risks are increasingly individualized as workers are pitted against one another, leading to fear and rivalry in the workplace. This risk imposes a layer of physical and emotional stress on the labouring body (Leslie 2002, 66). This is a key finding because it demonstrates an important shift in the behavior of workers. To return to Beck (1992), in the work society, workers bargained collectively and often stood united against precarious employment conditions. In the risk society, however, the fragmented nature of work pits workers against each other and forces them to experience and mediate risk individually.

Geographers have also investigated Beck's (1992) claim that work is becoming decentralized. Allen and Henry (1997) explain that service work, particularly, the contracts of cleaning workers, are often performed at multiple worksites. Although management may be located at a central site, the contracts themselves are carried out at literally thousands of work sites, such as office buildings, which are scattered across the city. As Allen and Henry (1997) note, the decentralized organization of contract cleaning work adds to the risk of workers who shuttle between isolated and unpredictable workplaces.

The geography of work in the cultural industries is also becoming decentralized. The growing prevalence of contract employment is shifting the location of work from static firm locations to the homes and third spaces used by freelance workers. Ekinsmyth (1999) reports that although freelance and home-based workers in magazine publishing are required to locate within the greater London area (U.K.), to facilitate face-to-face contact

between workers and employers, this spatial relationship is changing. Indeed, Ekinsmyth argues that the introduction and integration of communications technologies, such as email and faxes are slowly decentralizing the 'spacing' of work. She argues that "Employers are less concerned to employ people who live locally, as they are less reliant on face-to-face contact. For one interviewee, this, along with her husband's retirement, was enabling her long-wished-for release from London" (Ekinsmyth 1999, 357). Despite the potential role technology can play in restructuring the spatial dynamics of work in magazine publishing, however, further analysis of how technology allows work in specific cultural industries to be conducted, in a much broader range of locations including outside of major cities, has yet to be undertaken.

3.3 Individualization and the Rise of Entrepreneurial Subjectivities

It is clear that fragmentation is contributing to the individualization of employment and risk. In a less tangible sense, however, individualization also extends to the subjectivities and conduct of individual workers as well. The shift from the standard employment relationship to the 'risk society' is intertwined with a shift from the Keynesian welfare state to neoliberal regimes that encourage an individualization of risk and new models of subjectivity. As the state 'rolls back' traditional supports and certainties, and firms become flexible, responsibility is being downloaded to individual workers who are being encouraged to be self-reliant and self-governing (Peck and Tickell 2002). As Banks et al. (2000: 455) suggest,

the powers of state institutions to manage and counter risk have been lessened by modernization and globalization and risk management has become fully embedded within the domain of individuals.

The literature on governmentality extends our understanding of the individualization of risk and the individuals' increasing subjectification to risk (Beck 1992). This literature

stems from two of Michel Foucault's unpublished lectures in 1978 and 1979. According to Lemke, Foucault refers to government as the 'conduct of conduct,' and, the term governmentality applies to 'governing the self' and 'governing others' (Lemke 2001, 191). In the context of neoliberalism, both facets are becoming intertwined, as the state aims to 'govern others' by putting structures in place, which encourage individuals to 'govern themselves.' As Rose (1999: 69) explains,

The achievement of the liberal arts of government was to begin to govern through making people free. People were to be 'freed' in the realms of the market, civil society, the family: they were placed outside the legitimate scope of political authorities, subject only to the limits of the law. Yet the freeing of the zones was accompanied by the invention of a whole series of attempts to shape and manage conduct within them in desirable ways.

One way in which neoliberal regimes shape the conduct of individuals is by extending the mantra of economic rationality to formerly non-economic domains such as social and family life. As Brown argues, "not only is the human being configured exhaustively as 'homo-economicus', all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality" (2003, 3). Thus, ideal neoliberal subjects are entrepreneurs who make decisions in every sphere; political, social and economic, according to a rational calculation of costs and benefits. By extension, success in this form of entrepreneurial endeavor is based on the capacity of individuals for 'selfcare' – the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions (Brown 2003, 5). In this way, the neoliberal state downloads the full responsibility for success and failure in the 'marketplace of life' to individual entrepreneurs. As Brown explains, "the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action, e.g., lack of skills, education, and childcare in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits" (2003, 5). In this way, "the state leads and controls subjects without being

responsible for them,” essentially exerting control through freedom (Lemke 2001, 201).

Indeed, as Rose (1999: 268) argues,

The beauty of empowerment is that it appears to reject the logics of patronizing dependency that infused earlier welfare modes of expertise. Subjects are to do the work on themselves, not in the name of conformity, but to make them free.

Neoliberal regimes not only roll back and withdraw services, supports, regulation and institutions from workers and citizens, they roll out new programs designed to foster the creation of more entrepreneurial subjectivities as well (Peck and Tickell 2002). One such program positions autonomy as an ally of economic success rather than an obstacle that needs to be controlled and disciplined (Miller and Rose 2008). In fact, rather than desiring ‘passive’ citizens, neoliberal regimes encourage ‘active’ citizenship and empower individuals to function as entrepreneurs in every sphere. As Rose (1999, 164) asserts, more than simply reactivating the values of self-reliance, autonomy, independence, self-esteem and self-advancement, individuals now conduct their lives “as a kind of enterprise, seeking to enhance and capitalize on existence itself through calculated acts and investments. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry, therefore, is not a public-minded collective, but rather a group of individual entrepreneurs (Brown 2003, 5). The agendas of neoliberal regimes and flexible firms coincide strategically to mold individuals into self-motivating and self-governing workers.

During the 1980’s neoliberal regimes problematized the neglect of the values of entrepreneurship and individual self-motivation. Instead it was argued that work should be no longer viewed as the imposition of constraint, order and routine upon the individual. Indeed, as Miller and Rose (2008, 195) point out,

The enterprising self was a new identity for the employee, one that blurred, or even obliterated, the distinction between worker and manager. The enterprising self was

the active citizen of democracy at work, whether in charge of a particular product division, a large corporation or particular set of activities on the shop floor.

Writing about the 'enterprise culture' of work, McRobbie makes a direct connection between the neoliberal agenda in the U.K., put forward by the Thatcher government of 1979, and the individualization of fashion designers:

What individualization means sociologically is that people increasingly have to become their own micro-structures. They have to do the work of the structures by themselves, which in turn requires intensive practices of self-monitoring or 'reflexivity'. This process where structures (like the welfare state) seem to disappear and no longer play their expected roles, and where individuals are burdened by what were once social responsibilities, marks a quite profound social transformation (2002a, 518).

Therefore, the literature on risk and neoliberal governmentality suggests that individuals have greater freedom to construct their own biographies. Both literatures also assert that individuals are being conditioned to make choices according to the imperatives of self-reliance and economic rationality. There is a need to empirically investigate the extent to which workers in specific industries are in fact governed through their freedom (Miller and Rose 2008). In particular, there is a need to identify the ways in which human beings are individuated and the variety of practices within which they have come to govern themselves (Rose 1999, 43). Furthermore, as Jarvis and Pratt (2005, 3) argue, there is a need for geographers to consider the significant micro-compromises individuals make as a result of changing employment conditions. In the remainder of the chapter I engage with these bodies of literature to consider the employment experiences of independent musicians in Toronto.

The introduction and dissemination of specific technologies has radically altered the music industry. As outlined in Chapter 2, the digitalization of music production, distribution and consumption has increased the viability of independent music production. Technologies

have lowered the barriers to entry, and afforded individual musicians unprecedented levels of control, freedom and opportunity to produce, promote and distribute their products. As this musician put it,

(In terms of freedom), there has never been another time where you can be the writer, the producer, the distributor and promoter. You are the studio. You are the musician. You are the label. You are the business and enterprise of your own art. It is because of technology... (Interview)

Or as this music educator explains,

Digital technology is making it possible for people to do their own thing. Musicians can record on their own without being reliant on labels and financiers. This is opening up the world creatively to people and allowing musicians to get their music out there. (Interview)

At the same time, however, these opportunities have been accompanied by increasing demands and personal risk. As record labels 'roll-back' supports and services traditionally provided to signed musicians, musicians are now required to perform a growing range of creative and business tasks independently. Moreover, individual musicians are being encouraged to become more entrepreneurial and self-sufficient.

In the remainder of the chapter I argue that negotiating the new freedoms and risks afforded by technology and the rise of independent music production is becoming increasingly difficult for some musicians in Toronto. Moreover, that the onus for making decisions and dealing with the resulting consequences of those decisions now sit squarely on the shoulders of these workers who experience risk in an increasingly individualized way. Ultimately, I conclude that musicians' newfound freedoms and independence constitute a new form of risk (Beck 1992).

3.4 The Tensions between ‘Creative’ and ‘Business’ Tasks

Independent music production makes musicians individually responsible for creative tasks such as song writing and business tasks traditionally performed by their management or labels, such as booking and promoting live performances. My research suggests that although success in the music industry is predicated on the ability of musicians to effectively perform these tasks, not all musicians recognize the importance of the business side. As this music producer argues,

I think the whole business acumen is lacking, in terms of well-thought-out plans geared towards selling product... It is finding a way to time your album time, your recording schedule with the ultimate goal being to sell albums or to sell tickets to people to see you play, and to make money off of it that is your goal or should be your goal. If you say you're making music just for the sake of it, that is fine too, but it is called the music business. (Interview)

Or as this music producer and educator puts it,

Traditionally musicians didn't care about any of this stuff (business tasks). They just wanted to be an artist. But now when they are faced with the problem of doing things for themselves. It is hard to be an artist fully realized and then shut the tap off and then execute the business stuff because it is boring. (Interview)

Despite the long-standing antipathy between creativity and business, many of my respondents understood the importance of business tasks and put considerable effort into staying on top of them. Many of the musicians in my sample, for example, spoke proudly of how organized and efficient they could be in dealing with business tasks, alone or as a group. This finding, which points to the increasing professionalization of indie musicians, is particularly interesting given the long-held assumption that musicians, as bohemians, loath any connection to commercial activity. As this musician explains,

Everyone in the band has extra things they have to take care of. One member takes care of the shows. He books shows and knows if show offers are worth it or not. I am what they call the ‘Merch Mistress.’ I take care of inventory and make sure that we have everything, because before I joined the band they had no concept of what they were selling at a show or even if their float was coming out even in the end. So I

do a lot of accounting and making sure that if we run out of a size of shirt that we can re-order it in time for the next show. Merchandise is important. When we are touring, that is the sole basis of making money. So if we are out of something that is one less CD that we can sell. (Interview)

The need to balance creative and business tasks, however, puts enormous strain on independent musicians who struggle to allocate their time and energy effectively. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of these tasks and the skills required to perform them. Creative and business tasks require musicians to multi-skill and spread their time and energy across a range of workspaces. In particular, the growing emphasis on touring highlights the complex geography independent musicians operate within and the difficulties it can cause. As this musician puts it,

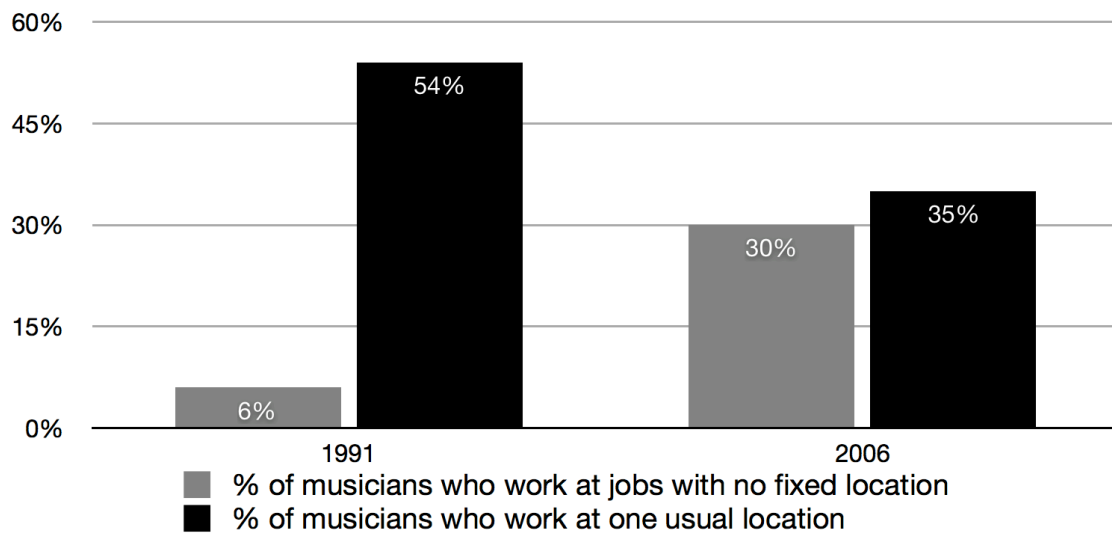
The biggest challenge for musicians in Canada is that the landscape of the country is so large. In Canada you have to go from Montreal to Vancouver just to sell a few records. (Interview)

Or as this musician explains,

When we went out 'West' we played Winnipeg twice. The first show was cancelled and the second show had like twenty people. We could not book a show in Saskatchewan, despite trying for months, so the real shows started in Edmonton. We played Calgary, Kanmore, Kamloops, Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle. So that is a huge distance to travel before hitting a good show. We literally drove for five days before we played our first good show. It is frustrating and when you are relying on that to put food on the table it is really difficult. (Interview)

Live performances take place in a variety of geographically dispersed venues while other tasks such as recording and marketing are also performed in a range of spaces, including the home, virtual spaces, studios and third spaces such as bars and coffee shops. As a result, independent music production requires musicians to oscillate between multiple tasks and multiple work sites.

Figure 3.1: The Spatially Fragmented Nature of Music Work in Toronto



Source: Statistics Canada,
Catalogue Number – 97-564-XCB2006005 (2006)
Catalogue Number – 97f0012xcb01050 (2001, 1996, 1991)

The process of juggling these psychic, physical and spatial transitions is now often compressed into a matter of hours. Indeed, for the musicians in my sample, simply figuring out this calculus creates conflicts and contributes to the various forms of risk they experience. As this musician asserts,

You always have to think outside the box because you are making things up as you go along. For example, trying to plan your schedule so that you can do everything that you need to do in a day. Today I have one million things to do, after this interview I am meeting with a client for a consultation. I have two students coming in for lessons. I have a meeting with a mother of a student, and then another meeting with the former student. You have to figure out how to get to where you need to be in time, despite the traffic, and despite the distances. (Interview)

For the musicians I interviewed, temporal fragmentation also creates conflict Much like the account of service workers by Allen and Henry (1997), independent musicians work around the clock, and they must also shift quickly between creative and business tasks. As this musician contends,

The biggest thing is multi-tasking. Last night I was up until 3:30 in the morning just making sure different business things were taken care of... Then this morning I did two performances. The first one started at 8:45 a.m.. (Interview)

It is clear that the work performed by independent musicians is chopped up into a range of tasks which can be creative or business related and that each task may be performed at a different time or work-site. As stated, this extreme fragmentation puts pressure on independent musicians to strategically structure their workdays and allocate their time, energy and resources.

When asked about the consequences of this pressure, several respondents reported feeling constantly torn about which tasks to prioritize. Indeed, some of the musicians in my sample feared that they were not devoting enough time to being creative and enhancing their creative output, including their songs, live shows and merchandise. At the same time, however, there was an understanding that great creative content and talent is not enough on its own to succeed in the crowded marketplace for music, and that the business tasks (packaging and marketing in particular) are essential ingredients as well. As a consequence, many of the musicians I interviewed agonize over devoting time to being creative or developing the business framework to support that creativity. The comments of this musician highlight the problem:

There is another element here, with this pressure for everybody in the Toronto indie music scene to do all of their own business stuff. The worst thing about it is that it really has taken a toll on their ability to become better musicians. Because the hours that they have to dedicate to all of this other stuff into their practice time. Signed bands like 'Billy Talent' though – I saw them rehearsing while we were doing some recoding at Cherry Beach studios – they basically rehearsed six hours a day. No indie band here would ever have time to do that. So basically you rehearse once a week, because you have to play shows and do all of these other things on top of that. That leads to another point. Most indie bands in the Toronto music scene suck, like they really suck. They don't play tight shows. They are not that creative. They have not really matured as musicians, and this goes on for year after year after year. (Interview)

Beyond highlighting the difficulties independent musicians face as a result of their flexibility and freedom, this quote also demonstrates that greater autonomy produces intense and continuous self-scrutiny and self-dissatisfaction (Rose 1999, 93). Independent musicians are required to perform business tasks, which they are often not suited or trained for. If they devote too much time to the business side, the creative content, on which their careers and earning potential rest, can suffer. This is complicated by current market conditions, which place a strong premium on original creative content such as songs, identities, live shows and merchandise (see chapter 5). On the other hand, however, even superior talent and creative content can remain unnoticed in an over crowded marketplace, if it is not effectively packaged and promoted. As this manager puts it,

Raw talent will be thrown in the garbage if the rest of the pieces are not together. The development deal doesn't happen like it used to. There's a guy who is amazing and he canceled a North American tour two days before because he wanted to stay home and paint. You simply can't be that flaky and still be successful. (Interview)

These findings support McRobbie's (2002b, 61) argument that independent cultural producers operate in a highly competitive environment where success is predicated on mastering and performing a growing range of creative and business tasks. More specifically, the case of independent musicians lends empirical weight to McRobbie's (2002a) assertion that multi-skilling and de-specialization corrodes the creativity of these individuals. Indeed, the time and energy independent musicians can afford to devote to being creative is significantly lower than their counterparts who work within the confines of major record labels. As entrepreneurial subjects, therefore, independent musicians are compelled to prioritize the economic viability of their endeavors above their passion for creativity. Indeed, for these musicians, market competition and the structure of the work leave little room to exercise the freedom of choice. In fact, the evidence suggests that independent

musicians have cast off their corporate yokes only to 'freely' drive themselves even harder under the entrepreneurial imperative of economic rationality and self-reliance. As this musician asserts,

You have to be driven! I mean I used to think that I was talented enough and things were going to fall into my lap. But now I know that is not going to happen. If you are not willing to work hard in this day and age it is not going to happen. You are not going to have your hand held. You are going to have to do it yourself. (Interview)

It is clear that new modes of entrepreneurial subjectivity and creative production are emerging. The success or failure of musicians rests squarely on the independent musicians themselves and specifically, their ability to be self-motivating and self-governing. Most importantly, these individuals bear the burden of managing all of the risks associated with independent music production and the contemporary marketplace for music-related products. In spite of the need to balance creative and business tasks musicians face these challenges alone and as this musician argues, the responsibility is on them:

I don't feel like I'm doing enough right now. We rehearse once a week and we do a show once a week. It is tough for me because I write all the music and do all the business stuff. I definitely spend a lot of time every day doing all this extra stuff. But I have to find a way. You have to make sure you are better than anything other people are going to see. I have to make sure that every single person that comes to my show is going to be absolutely floored. And that they walk away thinking 'I have to come back and see this band. I have to bring friends. I have to go to their website and download the music. (Interview)

In addition to complaining about the demands on their time, independent musicians in my sample also commented on the need to constantly shuttle across the city to perform different tasks. As this musician explains,

I am a freelance musician and as such my main source of income comes from performing. But because the pay is so low I have to make up for it with volume. I have to do more and more gigs. Last year we did 265 gigs all over the city... The grind is very difficult. At my age I simply don't have the energy anymore. It is too exhausting. (Interview)

It is clear that multi-skilling puts independent musicians in the difficult position of subordinating either their creativity or economic wellbeing. As a growing number of musicians choose the latter, the creative content of individual musicians and the scenes they participate in changes. According to one music producer and educator, multi-skilling has resulted in an appreciable decline in the originality and artistic vision of independent musicians in Toronto. As he points out, some musicians get so wrapped up in non-creative tasks and competing for paid work, that much of their creative output is highly compromised, unimaginative, derivative and boring:

I saw a band on Queen Street a few months ago. They were really good players and you could tell that they were practicing a lot because the songs were polished. They had all the moves, and I thought there is no reason why these guys are not as good as almost any other band out there. Except it was incredibly boring because I thought 'who cares.' They're not doing anything new. It just seems tired. My advice all the way through is that you've got to find something in yourself that is unique. You need to develop and express some kind of artistic vision... Many people now, however, are just thinking, what is selling? And how can I duplicate that? So I guess what I'm trying to say is you can do all that stuff to make yourself be noticed and to try and stand out from the crowd, but I think for me the ultimate thing is just to do something that is really special and true and that is what people will ultimately notice. (Interview)

3.5 The Tensions between Music and Non-Music Work

What is actually meant when someone earns so little, that two or more jobs are needed to make a living (Beck 2000, 83)?

In the previous section I argued that the work associated with independent music production is fragmented into a range of creative and business tasks, which are performed at different times across a range of worksites. I highlighted some of the conflicts created by this fragmentation and, in particular, how the creativity of some independent musicians is being corroded by the individualization of work. In this section I build on these findings by demonstrating further instances of fragmentation and conflict. I argue that the low paying nature of music work, combined with the expenses musicians incur individually, force many

independent musicians in my sample to take on additional jobs. As a result, the time and energy devoted to being creative is not only diluted by the need to perform business tasks but also by the need to perform additional jobs as well. Moreover, the spatial and temporal demands of these additional jobs contribute further challenges and conflicts to the already precarious lives of independent musicians.

Although many independent musicians are skilled, educated, hard working and increasingly professionalized, the goods and services they produce have limited value on the open market. As I outlined in chapter 2, the sales of recording music have declined steadily since 1999. In response to the devaluation of recorded music, independent musicians now focus on live performances to make money. As Hyatt (2008) points out, musicians in his sample earned 3.4% from selling CDs and 48.5% from performing live shows.³⁵ As the number of musicians trying to make a living from performing increases, however, the oversupply drives the value down and produces intense competition for paid work in Toronto's music scenes.

In fact, my research indicates that although live performances are the chief source of income for musicians, many of my respondents earn little or no money for their live performances. As this musician explains,

getting paid for gigs is a treat because there are so many musicians now and bands in the city and the majority of them are half decent so there is a lot of competition, but nobody's paying. You go to the club and they say 'yeah you are going on at this time but don't expect any money.' (Interview)

Even established bands who have played in Toronto for over 20 years argued that their earning power remains quite low and none of my respondents reporting getting paid more than \$500 to perform live. As this musician puts it,

³⁵ Hyatt conducted an online survey with 700 musicians in Canada between December 2006 and January 2007.

When you first start playing you get a few beer tickets and then maybe you will get \$50, I think the most I ever got paid for any show was \$350 and that of course was for the whole band. (Interview)

As a consequence, many of the musicians I interviewed complained about earning low incomes from music and not knowing when or how much they would be paid. In line with Ekinsmyth's (2002) study of freelancers in magazine publishing, musicians explained that this makes budgeting very difficult. As this musician argues,

It is a really difficult to not know, essentially most of the time you don't know more than two months ahead what kind of work you've got and how much money you're going to make. So if you look at your calendar, two months from now three months from now, it is empty. I have raised three children, and for the last 17 years I was a single mother, and I did all of that on this kind of a lifestyle... It is very stressful particularly when you are bringing up a family to have that kind of uncertainty, to not be able to budget. It is a real challenge, when you look at most people, they say they are making this much money, so I can spend this much on rent, or a mortgage, and I can spend as much on food, but when you are working as a freelance musician you have no idea, so what happens is, you just go ahead and spend the money, and you hope that it is going to come in. So sometimes you are wildly in debt. Other times you have got some money in the bank. A lot of things that normal people can do in their lives, you can't do. (Interview)

Faced with the challenge of being economically viable and self-reliant in an industry, which offers low and inconsistent pay, many musicians 'choose' to take on additional jobs. Although many of my respondents were reluctant to take on extra work, the decision was often described as a necessary evil and the only way of continuing their musical careers. As this musician puts it,

I work at Cosmo Music and I am also a drum teacher as well... As a musician it is very hard to make money and there is no steady or certain income. So I had to get a job that had guaranteed hours and pay. I needed something steady and reliable so now I know exactly how much I will make from Cosmo, and my teaching at this point is a bonus and the money goes toward making music. (Interview)

Or as this musician explains,

Money is a big thing. Everyone in the band has to have an extra job and work, because we don't really make enough money from our music. In our case we are a big band. So if you make \$100 at the show and it gets divided by ten people, that is

ten bucks a night. So that's not really helpful when you have to pay for gas and equipment and everything else. (Interview)

Much like the conflict between creative and business tasks, musicians who take on additional jobs face even more fragmented schedules and difficulties allocating their time and energy. While many additional jobs are music-related, such as teaching lessons or working at a music equipment store, some of these jobs are completely unrelated such as factory work. Moreover, these additional jobs may be spread across multiple worksites, involving 'flexible' or on-call hours and requiring skills that musicians may not possess by nature or training. Therefore, taking on additional jobs exacerbates the corrosion of creativity caused by further rounds of multi-skilling and de-specialization (McRobbie 2002a). Furthermore, the structures and requirements of these additional jobs, which feature various forms of flexibility, generate additional conflicts, which produce even more risk and uncertainty for musicians.

On the most basic level, musicians struggle to divide their time between making music and their additional jobs (an undertaking made even more difficult when these competing activities occur on opposite schedules or at distant locations).³⁶ Indeed, respondents explained the stress associated with performing late at night in the city and then waking up early to work at a factory or strip mall in the suburbs. As this musician puts it,

For me it is the sleep deprivation, balancing the job and the band stuff was exhausting for me. Getting up early everyday. I took a lot of sick days that I wasn't supposed to take, so that I could sleep. (Interview)

³⁶ In the 2006 Census musicians in Toronto reported working an average of 26.4 hours per week. This indicates that musicians spend a substantial portion of their time performing other tasks and jobs that are not music-related (Statistics Canada, catalogue number – 97-564-XCB2006005, 2006).

For many musicians in my sample, finding this balance becomes untenable when the additional jobs conflict directly with an important aspect of a musicians' musical career. Several respondents explained that they had to quit their extra jobs because of conflicts such as not being able to play a show, go on tour or attend regular rehearsal and recording sessions. As this musician explains,

I am currently unemployed because my work wouldn't give me the time off to go on tour and there was no way I was missing out on that, so I quit. I was working in a factory out in Etobicoke...making soap and wrapping gifts, stuff like that. Completely unrelated to anything musical, but it paid the bills. (Interview)

Conflicts between the scheduling of tasks and jobs are an issue for musicians who also struggle to reconcile the decentralized nature of these activities with the creative demands of music production. In addition to time, many of the musicians I interviewed complained that their additional jobs were depleting their reserves of energy and creativity, which left them unable to effectively perform creative tasks even when they had the time. As this musician argues,

I want something with flexibility. That is key for me because I found before working a 9-5 job is OK, but since I was having to go out there for eight, I was leaving my house at seven and when you have a late show the night before, I was walking around there like a zombie most days. The last month I was there I was trying out with a couple of other bands, so I was having rehearsals four nights a week that were going pretty late. So I would go home and by the time you get everything done you are in trouble. So I decided I need a job that has flexibility and a job that has less hours, something less than full-time, something part-time if I can. I prefer something where I don't have to necessarily give a lot. I am the kind of person who gives 110% in everything I do, but if I have to exert that much more energy into a job, at the end of the day I am not going to have any energy to put into music. (Interview)

My research indicates that many musicians operate in a diminished capacity in the face of these pressures or simply drop out of the industry all together. Echoing the findings of Lloyd (2006) I found that it is common for musicians to become 'lost' in their additional jobs because of the income and stability they provide. Interestingly, becoming 'lost' does

not stop these individuals from maintaining and celebrating their identities as musicians and 'creatives'. As this musician explains,

This place (music store) is full of people who have become sucked into or sidetracked by something. All the older people that are here, they all did their thing and gave up, I call them the failed musicians. They will give you a hard time about things because they think that they were in your shoes and couldn't hack it. They will try to deter you from making it or doing it because they failed and don't want you to succeed. Some of them are very unsupportive. They talk down to you because of it, but they are failed musicians. (Interview)

Or as this musician admits,

I find that I am really not excited anymore about going on tour...Last summer we booked some shows around Toronto and Québec and we lost money but now I have an apartment and I live with my girlfriend, so taking time off to go on tour is not really an option anymore. A lot of fellow musicians echo the sentiment that touring is a total grind...It is much easier to live with a 9-to-5 job, than playing gigs till three o'clock in the morning. (Interview)

In the absence of external supports from firms or the state, many independent musicians have no choice but to function as self-sufficient entrepreneurs who motivate and monitor themselves. As Beck (1992) states, in the face of growing uncertainty and risk there is a strong desire among workers to create that certainty for themselves. In order to accomplish this, many independent musicians I interviewed are forced to allocate their time between their musical careers and additional jobs. The imperative to be entrepreneurial and self-sufficient, however, necessitates the elevation of economic rationality above all other things, including creativity and family. As this musician asserts,

I think 75% of all of my money goes right to the band and I don't have a life. I can't buy anything for myself. Everything goes toward the band because we do everything independently so we have to pay for everything on our own. (Interview)

By outlining the tensions between creativity and economic self-sufficiency I have argued that independent musicians are forced to make difficult decisions about where to allocate their time, energy and resources. In particular, I demonstrate that prioritizing

business tasks and additional jobs has the potential to corrode the creative output of musicians. In the next section I examine the consequences of prioritizing work over non-work to highlight the enormous social costs associated with entrepreneurial employment.

3.6 The Tensions between Work and Non-Work

The boundaries between work and non-work are not only becoming blurred in the physical sense but also as a result of the growing compulsion to prioritize work over all other things in life. Temporally, work may be performed at any point in the day and the workweek has extended to include weekends and holidays. Spatially, work is being distributed across multiple physical sites, a range of virtual spaces and most notably inside the home itself. Indeed, the 2006 Canadian Census indicates that 33% of all musicians in Toronto worked from home (Statistics Canada 2008a).³⁷ However, unlike other industries in which firms foist flexibility onto their employees, independent musicians ‘freely’ choose to privilege work over non-work as a result of their apparent compliance with neoliberal imperatives. As this musician explains,

In order to make a living, you have to be willing to work when the work is there, you have to make hay while the sun shines and everything else in your life has to come second to that. This is very difficult when it comes to having a social life and relationships or a home life. I personally don't have much of a social life because of this. It is high energy. It takes huge amounts of energy and hours. In the first few years working I literally had three or four days off in a year, including weekends. You need to be completely driven and obsessive and a 'Type A' (personality). (Interview)

The shift toward self-directed and spatially decentralized work has been accompanied by the temporal fragmentation and extensification of work (Jarvis and Pratt 2005). The strict delineation between work and non-work time, which typified the work society, is being replaced by flextime in the risk society (Beck 1992). Rather than being parceled out into neat and predictable blocks, contracts and shifts are now performed during evenings

³⁷ Statistics Canada catalogue number – 97-564-XCB2006005 (2006).

and weekends (Allen and Henry 1997; Reimer 1998). Indeed, Leslie (2002: 64) points to the growing prevalence and uncertainty of part-time and shift work:

As in other forms of retailing, the majority of employees in clothing retailing are part-time. Many work only one or two shifts a week, and shifts are often as short as three hours. An additional problem is that the hours are unpredictable.

This temporal fragmentation of work contributes to employment uncertainty and income insecurity for workers. In particular, as Leslie (2002) highlights, the precarious experience of being 'on-call' is spreading quickly for retail workers who wait by the phone to be summoned to perform a few hours of low paid work. Being 'on call' is also a common feature of freelance employment in the cultural industries (Ekinsmyth 1999). The uncertainty produced by the contractualization of work leads to what Beck describes as underemployment (1992). Importantly, the flexibilization of work forces many individuals to devote more time and energy to work-related activities, including performing multiple jobs, networking, training and looking for work.

As Ekinsmyth explains, the uncertainty of obtaining contracts compels freelancers in magazine publishing to take on as much work as possible even at the risk of working round the clock and developing physical and mental illnesses;

Hard work seemed universally recognized as a penalty of freelancing, especially for home workers, who are often unable to draw a divide between work and relaxation. Reports of working until midnight and being a workaholic were not infrequent and this was clearly a perceived danger of freelancers. As one respondent explained, 'most of the freelancers I know work so hard because they're just always taking on work in case they don't get any more' (1999, 361).

In addition to performing the work directly associated with contracts, many workers in the cultural industries perform time-consuming and unpaid tasks in order to maintain their employability. As Jarvis and Pratt (2005: 7) explain,

The extension of work (time) only captures one dimension of the issue. A further dimension is the pressure on individuals and companies to network strategically in

order to remain competitive. This implies an extra work burden: the pressure to take part in the buzz of office, or post-office activity, or, the need to have 'face-time' with clients or remote co-workers. All of these activities place considerable burdens on individuals' time and invariably that of their household too.

This compulsion stems from the neoliberal conceptualization of unemployment. As Rose argues, unemployed and underemployed individuals are obliged to improve their "employability by acquiring skills, both substantial skills and skills in acquiring work, and obliging the individual to engage in a constant and active search for employment (1999, 162). Indeed, Batt et al. (2000) argue that new media workers spend considerable time maintaining their employability by networking, looking for work and upgrading their skills. As they report, while new media workers spend an average of 42 hours a week at work, they spend an additional 20 hours a week on average upgrading their skills and looking for new work.

The allocation of time between work and non-work is often described as a depletion model where adding to one depletes the other, yet there is a tacit assumption that some harmonious balance is ultimately achieved (Perrons et al. 2006). In reality, however, the extensification of work eliminates the hope of any such balance and forces workers to choose between competing activities. Ekinsmyth (1999: 360), for example, highlights the sacrifices female workers make to maintain their employability in cultural industries such as magazine publishing:

Although by becoming freelance none of the female respondents in this research had sacrificed economic autonomy, they were all less than devoted to career progression in magazine publishing. They commented that females in magazine publishing are most likely to be young and childless and that older, more senior females have typically sacrificed the possibility of the family in order to progress up the career ladder. Those who have children seem to disappear from the workforce.

The fragmentation and extensification of work produces obvious tensions between work and non-work. In some cases the extensification of work occurs as a result of

contractual obligation and fear. In the cultural industries, the extensification of work is construed as a calculated choice (Batt et al. 2000; Christopherson 2002a) (while firms and contractors do not explicitly require workers to attend after hours events to network, spend their weekends updating their skills, or take on simultaneous contracts, individuals feel compelled to take on these responsibilities). In one sense these workers freely decide to 'bring work home,' but in reality there is no viable alternative. After all, without networking to find work, training to perform that work, and over-working to pay the bills, these individuals would face even greater employment risk.

Although the respondents in my study were under no illusion that they had to accept the extensification of work to survive as independent musicians, they were not oblivious to or comfortable with the consequences. In fact, much like the conflict produced by choosing between creative and business tasks and spending time on additional jobs, some independent musicians struggle to reconcile their desire to be self-reliant musicians with taking time for their families and themselves. However, this is precisely the goal of neoliberal regimes, which endeavor to reposition the social and the economic as antagonistic. As Rose argues, "economic government is to be desocialized in the name of maximizing the entrepreneurial comportment of the individual" (1999, 144). In other words, independent musicians may be held hostage and controlled by their freedom (Lemke 2001). As this musician puts it,

What is typical for us, and I think it is unfortunate, is that you never have the sense that you are done, that you are really free. It is not that you never take a day off, but you have to take a day off in spite of the fact that you think you should be practicing, and you never feel like you have a weekend or something. It is not like you come home and you're done. You feel that you don't have any energy to do anything, but when you come home you also feel that you should be looking at something or practicing something. There is always that nagging feeling. (Interview)

Much like the account of retail workers feeling constantly 'on call,' musicians who are

waiting for that next paid source of income reported being forced to put other things on hold to maintain their employability. As this musician explains,

People keep asking me why I don't get a home phone. I'm like, 'because I have this (cell phone) with me all the time and if it rings and it's a gig I can say yes right away.' You can't wait to get home to get the message because you will miss it. Somebody else will snap it up first... It's cutthroat. (Interview)

Or as this musician asserts,

As a freelancer you are totally dependent on when the phone rings. If you get offered a job you can't afford not to take it because you will lose your place in line and they won't call you back again. So that means that it is very difficult to create anything outside of the music, to create a life because you are so tied to being available when the phone rings. (Interview)

While cell phones extend the feeling of being 'on call,' other digital technologies allow a greater range of tasks to be performed in the home or remotely. Whereas musicians traditionally recorded and produced music in studios, with computers and software these tasks can now be performed in the home. Moreover, with social media programs such as MySpace and an Internet connection, musicians can also network with fans and collaborators, promote and distribute their products via their website and perform most of their non-creative tasks whenever and wherever they can find the time. Therefore, digital technologies facilitate the privileging of the economic over the social by removing the spatial and temporal barriers which have traditionally segregated these realms.

In *Powers of Freedom* Rose (1999, 233) asks, "What are the costs of our contemporary freedom?" The findings in this section demonstrate the steep social costs independent musicians incur as a result of their newfound autonomy and freedom. In line with Ekinsmyth's (1999 2002) analysis of female freelancers in magazine publishing, several respondents in my research explained that being a self-reliant independent musician was incompatible with raising children and that choosing between the two was difficult. As this

musician argues,

As a freelance musician, you have to keep your expenses down and you have to sacrifice things, I live in this tiny house and I didn't have children because I didn't think this would be a good way to bring up a child. Many musicians do have children of course, but often the other spouse is the one who is staying at home. You have to have one person making money and one person at home. Otherwise it is a rotten life for a kid to grow up in. I didn't meet anybody so that was not going to work out for me. (Interview)

The social lives of many musicians are compromised by the demands of independent music production and their additional jobs. To return to the depletion model, there are simply not enough hours in the day to allocate evenly, and some imperatives are being prioritized at the expense of others. As we have seen, however, temporal fragmentation is accompanied by spatial fragmentation. Therefore, just as the choice of some independent musicians to 'bring work home' prioritizes economic over social activities, choosing to 'leave home' for extended periods produces a similar and cumulative effect. As this musician explains,

It is difficult to balance personal relations. I lost my girlfriend a couple of times. I joined a cover band a few years ago and we were giggin' every weekend, Friday-Saturday, Friday-Saturday. But between teaching and working, the weekends were the only time I had for my girlfriend. So it put a real big damper on our relationship. I wasn't seeing her much and when we were together my head was somewhere else. I was playing and playing and playing and I was stuck in that world. The work-life balance is tough. It is very hard for a musician to balance both lives. If you are dedicating yourself to music and only music, then you are going to find it hard to have a personal life. (Interview)

3.7 Conclusion: Does Technology Offer Freedom?

To be governed through our freedom: the very idea seems paradoxical. Freedom appears, almost by definition, to be the antithesis of government: freedom is understood in terms of the act of liberation from bondage or slavery, the condition of existence and liberty, the right of the individual to act in any desired way without restraint, the power to do as one likes (Rose 1999, 62).

I began this chapter by identifying the need to investigate the role technology plays in fragmenting the nature of work and intensifying the degree of risk experienced by the

independent musicians in my sample. As outlined in Chapter 2, digital technologies have democratized the music industry and provided unprecedented levels of freedom and autonomy for individual musicians. Indeed, digital technologies have lowered the barriers to producing, marketing and distributing recorded music to a point where anybody can enter the marketplace. The question, however, is to what extent do independent musicians experience newfound freedom?

Throughout this chapter, I addressed this question by considering the dynamic and competing demands being placed on individual musicians. I conclude that despite the promise of being able to construct ones' own biography, the freedom exercised by some musicians is severely constrained. Structurally, I demonstrate that the creative and non-creative demands of independent music production force musicians to multi-skill and de-specialize (thus, reducing the amount of time musicians can spend on being creative and the quality and originality of their creative outputs).

Furthermore, I assert that the declining demand for music related products, due to file sharing and low entry barriers, puts downward pressure on the incomes independent musicians can earn from producing and selling music-related products. As a result, rather than allowing musicians to freely pursue opportunities in the democratized digital marketplace for music, the technologies responsible for this democratization are compelling independent musicians, as self-reliant neoliberal subjects, to take on additional jobs to sustain themselves. Splitting time, energy and resources between music careers and additional jobs, however, put many respondents in an even more precarious position as they face added layers of fragmentation, risk and uncertainty. The net effect of essentially pursuing two or more careers simultaneously is the inevitable creation of further conflicts for workers. In particular, I highlight the social costs caused by the prioritization of work

over non-work and the extensification of work and economic imperatives into the domestic sphere.

These findings clearly indicate that the working lives of my respondents have become more precarious and fraught with risk as a result of digital technologies, independent music production and entrepreneurial subjectivities in the neoliberal era. Crucially, engaging with these risks on a daily basis is not optional for musicians who have been condemned to reflexivity by their desire to pursue musical career paths (Beck et al. 1994). Therefore, the impetus to negotiate and mediate conflict and risk is stronger than ever. As a result, the next logical step in analyzing the employment experiences of independent musicians in Toronto is to examine their development and use of risk mediation strategies. In Chapter 4 I demonstrate how the network ecologies of musicians are changing in response to digital technologies, independent music production, competition and risk.

Chapter 4

What's Going On? The changing network ecology of musicians in Toronto

In general, a spirit of optimism has been linked to discussions of economic networks. They have been viewed as innovative, adaptive, resilient, open, and regenerative economic forms and... often seem to be connected with a sense of fairness or economic democracy (Leitner et al. 2002, 278).

4.1 Introduction

In economic geography networking has become a 'catch-all' term that is invoked to explain a range of positive phenomena, including knowledge transfers, spillovers and innovation. Networking is also regarded as an essential practice through which workers mediate risk and advance their careers. This is especially true for freelance workers in the cultural industries who use networks to access information about sources of employment as well as resources, equipment, training, mentoring and emotional support (Banks et al. 2000; Coe 2000; Ekinsmyth 2002; Christopherson 2002a; Grabher, 2002). A cursory reading of this literature produces an overwhelmingly positive and generalized account of networking, particularly, with respect to the benefits that accrue to individual workers (Huber 2008).

Recently, however, several geographers have challenged this view by producing critical studies, which highlight the inconsistencies and negative aspects within networks, more specifically, the tendency of networks to be undemocratic and exclusionary (Jackson and Oliver 2003; Christopherson 2008). Although a more critical lens is being applied to networking, several important gaps in our understanding persist. The impact of technology and industrial restructuring on the practices and spatial dynamics of networking is still under-theorized. Moreover, geographers have yet to consider the extent to which face-to-face interaction is being supplemented and even replaced by networking in virtual spaces.

Similarly, there is a need to move beyond firms and projects to examine the experiences of individuals who function as individualized entrepreneurs (Jackson and Oliver 2003). Indeed, as Grabher and Ibert point out “since the firm no longer constitutes the exclusive learning arena, individual practices necessarily draw on the personal relational space that extends far beyond the current firm” (2006, 258). Finally, there is a need to examine the extent to which networks are democratic, open and supportive, particularly, in industries and locations where competition and individualization is intensifying. Indeed, Jackson and Oliver (2003) acknowledge the widely held assumption that the music industry relies heavily on networks but also point to the potential ‘dark side’ of networks, which may take the form of ‘lock in’ or exclusion. The authors also suggest that insufficient scholarly attention has been paid to understanding the networks of entrepreneurial musicians.

In this chapter I address these gaps by investigating the network ecology of musicians in Toronto. I argue that the fragmented and demanding nature of independent music production, coupled with intense competition, individualizes musicians and alters the way some of them value and practice networking. Extending the work of Christopherson (2002a 2008), I demonstrate the tendency for some established musicians to form ‘defensive exclusionary networks’ to safeguard their access to the dwindling supply of paid work. As independent musicians are spending a greater share of their time and energy performing additional tasks, I argue that social networking is becoming less popular with some musicians. As a result, I highlight the shift to what Grabher and Ibert (2006) call ‘connectivity’ networks, which entail the formation of short-term and strategic collaborations with individuals who possess complementary skills sets. Crucially, ‘connectivity’ networking is predicated on solving specific problems and performing tasks associated with independent music production, rather than sharing information about

sources of work. Specific examples of connectivity networking include independent musicians collaborating with fashion designers, photographers and web designers. As connectivity networking is more amenable to virtual interactions than social networking, which works best with repeated face-to-face interaction, I also explore the increasing role virtual spaces such as blogs, forums and email play in the working lives of some musicians. Ultimately, the findings I present underscore the need for a more nuanced and critical approach to networking in economic geography, which investigates the evolving and exclusionary nature of networks in the digital economy.

4.2 Networks in the Cultural Industries

In case studies that examine the employment structures of creative workers, the widespread practice of networking is described as an essential strategy for mediating employment risk (Banks et al. 2000; Coe, 2000; Ekinsmyth 2002; Christopherson 2002a; Grabher 2002). Often through, but not limited to, face-to-face interactions, workers build up networks which can provide a range of tangible and intangible benefits, including resources and equipment, emotional support, motivation and knowledge. For example, creative workers with limited economic resources often share the cost of specialized equipment, workspace and operating costs (Menger 1999). Moreover, individualized creative workers are shown to mediate the feelings of isolation and loneliness through networks, which provide emotional support and motivation (Bain 2005). Perhaps most importantly, networks provide vital information about sources of employment and potential collaborations (Christopherson and van Jaarsveld 2005; Neff 2005). Indeed, accessing this information, which is also called 'buzz', 'local broadcasting' or 'noise', is a key benefit of networking with other workers and firms (Bathelt et al. 2004). In this example, Cohen

(1991: 34) describes how musicians in local scenes have traditionally benefited from networks,

(Musicians in bands) established relationships with the (other) bands...and built up a network of exchange and support. They joked and gossiped together; debated the merits of other bands; passed on contacts, advice, technical and musical skills, information about gigs, venues, and record companies; stood in for each other when a replacement player was needed and helped each other during recording sessions. Between them instruments and equipment were shared, loaned, sold, and thereby continually circulated from band to band. In addition, those bands often performed together on the same night, sharing the cost of public transport, and PA hire, or attended each others' performances...Such collaboration encouraged bands to improve their music, and the performance of it, in order to keep up with the other bands and satisfy their critical appraisal.

It is clear that networking provides individual workers with access to a range of beneficial resources, which can be used to mediate employment risk. But how are these networks formed, fostered and structured? The robust literature in geography and sociology asserts that the basic building block of social networks is trust (Granovetter 1973 1985; Coe 2000; Storper and Venables 2004; Bathelt et al. 2004). Trust can be built through a number of different and overlapping activities, including shared experience, common characteristics, co-location and face-to-face interaction. It brings people together and facilitates the exchange of resources, support and knowledge. Trust is therefore the prerequisite for knowledge exchange and the level of established trust has an important impact on the frequency, quality and volume of these exchanges. Granovetter (1973 1985), for example, makes the distinction between individuals with strong ties and weak ties. Strong ties are based on higher levels of trust and often generate networks in which individuals do not hesitate to share. Weak ties on the other hand are based on lower levels of trust, often between friends of friends or colleagues of colleagues who do not have a long or intense history of interaction and shared experience.

Commentators explain that both types of ties and networking relationships have strengths and weaknesses (Granovetter 1973; Grabher 1993; Gray et al. 2007). Strong ties, for example, are the staple of networked relations. However, the 'weakness of strong ties' is the danger of individuals becoming too focused on or embedded within a closed system. Indeed, Grabher (1993) argues that 'lock-in' can limit the flow of new knowledge and resources across networks. The 'strength of weak ties' lies in their ability to bring new opportunities, ideas and knowledge to individuals from outside their usual circle of friends or colleagues. As weak ties are based on lower levels of trust, however, the information derived from weak tie networks is often less credible and helpful. Ultimately, optimum networking involves the ongoing development and maintenance of both strong and weak ties that provide reliable sources of knowledge, support and resources.

4.3 Communality, Sociality and Connectivity: A Networking Typology

To move beyond the 'ambiguity of personal knowledge networks' Grabher and Ibert (2006) develop a three-part typology of contemporary networking practices. This typology identifies three types of networks: communality, sociality and connectivity networks. Communality networks are based on shared norms and values. They denote robust and strong ties and are firmly rooted in personal familiarity. These networks are limited in terms of the number of relationships one can maintain. In this way, "access to and extension of these networks is rather limited" making them inherently exclusionary (2006, 259). The authors assert that communality presents two problems. First, there is a propensity for such networks to invite 'free riders,' "from within the relationships to not work as hard as they might, or have to, if they were not connected" (2006, 260). This can hinder the productivity and effectiveness of collective ventures. Second, strong ties and identification with a firm or group can restrain entrepreneurial ambitions and activities (2006, 260).

Although communality networks are not based on a high frequency of interaction and can remain dormant over long periods of time before being reactivated, sociality networks require constant investments of time and effort to maintain and expand. Based quite literally on keeping in touch and rubbing shoulders, sociality networking is predicated on developing and re-activating ties through ongoing face-to-face encounters (Grabher and Ibert 2006, 261). Although the levels of trust are much lower in these networks and exchanges are typically superficial, the advantage is that these networks can generate information from hundreds of weak ties. As such, sociality networks are an indispensable resource for nomadic project workers, providing them with critical information about job opportunities (2006, 261).

In the cultural industries, where time is at a premium, however, the benefits of social networking come at the expense of diverting time and energy to establishing and maintaining these networks. Indeed, several geographers have noted that the work involved in social networking spills over into the domestic 'non-work' sphere (Jarvis and Pratt, 2005). Christopherson, for example, reports that once employed, new media workers spend 20% of their work time looking out for new opportunities (2002a, 2011). Grabher and Ibert caution that hanging out in sociality networks incurs considerable transaction costs (2006, 262).

The third type of networking, connectivity networking, is based on strategic interactions and collaborations between individuals with very weak ties. As Grabher and Ibert (2006: 263) point out,

While communality amalgamates friendship and professional issues, and sociality more strategically supports business agendas with private facets, communication in connectivity is relatively distant from the personal realm and most succinctly focuses on the specific subject matter of a present project. Social relations are almost purely informational.

As connectivity is based on strategic problem solving, the interaction often unfolds in virtual spaces such as online forums. Unlike communality networks where individuals share common experiences and skill-sets, the organizational logic of connectivity networks is predicated on the complementarity of skills-sets. In fact, the comparative efficiency of this lean organizational form depends on minimizing overlaps and redundancies of competencies (2006, 264). Individuals in these networks seek out, connect and collaborate precisely to solve problems and overcome deficiencies in their own skill-sets. Importantly, the 'professional ethos of collaborative problem solving' and mutual backing generates a sense of general reciprocity, which helps to constrain free-riding in connectivity networks (2006, 265). Ultimately, Grabher and Ibert (2006: 266) argue:

These different personal network logics do not constitute sharply demarcated sections of social reality but rather amalgamate into a diffuse relational space. The neat tie-and-node cartographies of relational networks here indeed dissolve into untidy combinations of social logics. In this messy relational space, in which actors maneuver across different social contexts, personal identity in fact is fluid.

As a result, it is important to think of the personal identities and networking practices of workers in different industries as fluid and capable of reacting to the changing contours of employment, the market and technology.

4.4 The Changing Network Ecology of Musicians In Toronto

As I outline in chapter 2 and chapter 3, technology has significantly altered the structures and imperatives of the music industry. While independent music production has become the dominant structure of employment, the market dynamics have shifted as well. Technology and independent production now allow an unprecedented number of producers and music-related products to enter the marketplace. At the same time, however, the illegal downloading of recorded music and the oversupply of live music has

reduced the value of these products (see figure 1.1). By extension, these conditions have produced fierce competition, which pits musicians against one another and exacerbates the individualization of employment and risk. A related facet of the music economy in Toronto is that it is not governed or supported by strong institutions or regulatory frameworks. In the absence of institutions and firms, therefore, musicians who function as entrepreneurs face the demands of music production, and risk individually. My findings suggest that while networks remain important to musicians, the ways in which some of my respondents, value, cultivate and employ these networks is changing. In the following sections I argue that as communality networking becomes more exclusionary and social networking becomes less effective, some musicians in Toronto are prioritizing connectivity networks in order to mediate the risks associated with technology, independent music production and competition.

4.5 Communality Networking and Exclusion

Within networks, it is trust and the expectation of reciprocity that encourages individuals to share knowledge and resources. However, economic opportunity also motivates individuals to share. When jobs are plentiful, the availability of paid work facilitates the relatively free flow of information about jobs. When paid work becomes scarce, however, there is a tendency for workers to restrict the flow of information. Thus, market dynamics and competition have a strong influence on the 'openness' of networks. In Toronto, there is evidence that the dwindling amount of paid work, from live performances, is eroding trust and the willingness of some musicians to share information and resources with competitors. As this musician explains,

I don't see a whole lot of mentoring going on right now. It might happen with a close friend or a teacher but it is rare. It would not be with somebody else on the job market, somebody who is the competition.

Or as this musician puts it, “I try to not to get too involved with other bands because they are our competition” (Interview).

In particular, music scenes in Toronto are increasingly divided between ‘insiders’ with established ties and ‘outsiders’ who are trying to break in. Therefore, my findings support recent claims, which challenge the positive view of networking and the specific assumption that the barriers to establishing and maintaining networks are low. Indeed, Gray et al. (2007) argue, that the benefits of networking are celebrated where and when they work and any underlying conditions of conflict, power-struggles and exclusion are shrouded by the assumption of harmonious outcomes. In a similar fashion, Huber suggests that the literature “tends to emphasize and assume positive outcomes without considering potential negative effects” (2008, 8). Collectively, these critics argue that networking is not universally positive or inherently democratic. Christopherson, for example, asserts that networks foster and reinforce labour segmentation among women and men, and among ethnic groups and can restrict access to job opportunities and careers (2008, 75). More explicitly, Christopherson (2008: 89) argues that restructuring and risk compels some individuals to form defensive exclusionary networks:

The production process in both film and television continues to be organized around high-risk, project-based work and around industry networks. As middle-budget project opportunities have declined, preexisting networks show a tendency to pull in and go with the reliable and familiar, despite the expansion of a large and diverse labor supply and its creative resources. So, one manifestation of workforce adaptation to new conditions is the persistence and strengthening of defensive exclusionary networks to dominate access to the least risky and most lucrative and prestigious end of the industry production spectrum. These networks are composed almost exclusively of white men.

Much like the ‘defensive exclusionary networks’ Christopherson (2008) describes in new media, I found evidence that some established musicians in Toronto, with

communality networks, are excluding less connected outsiders in order to protect their access to paid work. As this musician explains,

I have a small circle of friends and we are very tight knit. It is incestuous in a way. There is a group of people and they all play in each other bands. The last band I was in for eight and a half years. A bunch of a guys in that band were in different projects during that time and we usually just draw from that pool for new bands, shows or session work. It would be that immediate group or people connected to those people. (Interview)

Competition, is 'closing' the networks of some musicians in Toronto, reducing the flow of information, and limiting the effectiveness of networking as a means to mediate risk. As this musician argues,

Because of the competition, the networks are more difficult to penetrate and the flow of information about things like job opportunities is certainly more guarded than it once was. All of my jobs are from networking and who I know but I have established that network from being around for 30 years... I know a small group of good players and we socialize on occasion, but each one of us is fairly protective of our own work (Interview).

Or as this musician puts it,

It is a very small world. Our scene is a collective. People play in each other's bands and there is a lot of crossover. In my case I play in multiple projects but there are a lot of the same people popping up in the projects. In terms of meeting people for the band it is a small world of interconnected people, people from high school and university. (Interview)

The reference to high school and university is important because it points to how, where and when these communality networks are originally formed. Indeed, many of the established musicians I spoke with, who rely on communality networks to access paid work, indicate that they developed these strong ties during their education. Moreover, they confirm Grabher and Ibert's (2006) assertion that communality networks can be reactivated even after long periods of dormancy. As this musician explains,

I met all kinds of people when I was at the University of Toronto in the 1980's. That is where the networking happened for me. It was back then. Those are the connections that matter for getting work. It mattered for the Stratford job, for

example. Somebody I used to go to school with pulled me in there. He was leaving that job and told them to hire me. So that was all a result of having gone to school with this person in Toronto. At this point in my career, networking is about reconnecting with people I went to school with or people I have known for a long time. It is not about going to a bar or something to 'hang out.' (Interview)

Therefore, shared experience and affiliation serves to separate insiders and outsiders.

Moreover, for those who do not belong to these important clubs, accessing information about work is that much more difficult. As this musician argues,

You are not going to be part of the Toronto scene unless you went to school here. It is difficult to break in (for outsiders). For freelancing, there is rarely anything formal or announced. (Interview)

Another basis for exclusion in Toronto's music scenes is gender. In the following sections I provide evidence of this exclusion and demonstrate how it limits the ability of incoming musicians to access paid work, information and resources.

In their study of exclusion Gray et al. (2007, 153) indicate that in the ICT industry, many female respondents spoke of being 'out of the loop' and being excluded from the important flow of information about career advancement. This feeling was certainly echoed by female musicians in my sample who work as freelancers in Toronto's live music scenes.

As this musician argues,

As a woman the risks are magnified because it is still quite a strong man's world out there...I do know the guys now. I have finally made it on their lists. But for many years I wasn't on the list or was at the bottom of the list. They wouldn't even think of me if a job came up. I am on the list now but only because I have been working here for so long. (Interview)

The exclusion of female musicians also extends to male-dominated spaces, which serve important gate-keeping functions. Several female respondents, for example, reported being deliberately excluded and ridiculed at local music equipment stores where a lot networks are fostered and maintained. As this musician remembers,

In Ottawa everyone knew each other in the music world but when I got here (Toronto) you don't know everybody. So you would go into a music store and I walked in there and I was looking for equipment and they would say 'why don't you just get your boyfriend in here to tell you what you really need?' Or I would get comments like 'where's your boyfriend?' and they would look around the store and I would say 'it is for me!'. Afterwards they would say 'OK this is how much it costs' and I would say 'I am not buying it here anymore!' and just walked out. (Interview)

Although Bayton (2006) has presented similar empirical findings, it is important to consider this example in the wider context of competition (in other words, to acknowledge the likelihood that this exclusion is motivated by the desperation of those 'in power' to maintain that position by excluding others). As this musician recalls,

I have had a lot of conductors who literally refuse to acknowledge me as capable, because I was a woman of color... I have heard this from a rather famous conductor who is completely racist. So what I am supposed to do against that? He had too much power, so I just decided I didn't want to be near him and I didn't play where he was conducting. And that was definitely something of an economic choice because it limited my opportunities for work. I just refused to be treated that way. (Interview)

In the absence of firm-based hierarchies and traditional career advancement, this power essentially limits access to paid work. In Toronto, for example, more established bands that have relationships with venue owners have a greater ability to secure 'paying gigs,' while others will often be forced to play for free or even pay to play. These established bands can also recommend that venue owners hire other bands to perform on the same night. As such, these bands control a powerful gate-keeping position whereby they can pass paid work to members of their networks and keep non-members out. Several respondents, who were struggling to penetrate these networks, commented about their exclusionary nature. As this female musician puts it,

It is a little clique and if they don't like you or the band you're in, you won't be able to get any gigs, or if you don't hang around at the bars that they hang around at. The networks can be exclusionary just like high school. (Interview)

In addition to gender, exclusion is also based on connections to physical spaces such as venues. My respondents also suggest that genre and musical style can invite exclusion as well. As this musician explains,

I do very few things in Toronto outside of my main job. I always wished I could do more, that I could stay home in Toronto and participate more, and I'm happy to talk about this. People tend to think that I can't perform other periods of music, and in my opinion this is a significant component of this competitive atmosphere. The people who are doing other things are very reluctant to see people like me, compete with them. It is easier for them to keep people like me pigeonholed into certain categories because if I can't get out of my category, then they don't have to worry about me as a threat to take their jobs or gigs. (Interview)

In chapter 3 I demonstrate that competition for work and the fragmented nature of independent music production individualizes some musicians. More specifically, I draw on Leslie (2002) to show how individual musicians are being pitted against one another. My findings suggest that competition for paid work is a powerfully divisive force in Toronto's music scenes. Indeed, even established musicians who enjoy insider status and participate in communality networks spoke of the fine line between competing and cooperating. This musician, for example, describes the unwritten rules that govern communality networks and the severe consequences of crossing the line:

If I can't do a job, I will call another player in the group and say 'I can't do this gig, can you do it?' But it is on the understanding that because she is part of that group she won't try and take the job away from me. So there are rules. I offer the job to her, we look after each other, but the fact that we know we need to keep working is always at the forefront. So there is an established pecking order that is perpetuated...So that can be called a network but it is a network with particular unspoken agreements about what is and what is not acceptable...If somebody does step out of line and break one of the rules, they will be forced out of the network. I've seen that happen a couple of times. People have tried to get work in the wrong way... but the consequence of somebody coming in and trying to go over someone's head is that they generally get shut out of the work, and subsequently shut out of any network participation. So people coming in have to respect the people who have been around and the relationships that have already been established. But all of this is unspoken. It is not in writing anywhere. (Interview)

The evidence presented in this section supports Christopherson's (2008) claim that

not all networks are inherently democratic and open. Indeed, beneath the exterior of Toronto's music community, which is globally recognized for its diversity and inclusiveness, lie struggles over employment opportunities, which serve to further individualize musicians. As this musician argues, "In Toronto the competition is way beyond healthy for musicians...The scene is non-existent. I don't feel a part of a musical community" (Interview). To cope with these challenges, some small groups of established musicians isolate themselves within the confines of communality networks. For the established musicians I interviewed, safeguarding their access to paid work by excluding outsiders may be a necessary survival strategy, but how do excluded musicians mobilize networks to cope with competition? In the remainder of the chapter I outline the factors which are reducing the effectiveness of social networking and examine the reasons why connectivity networking is becoming a more popular alternative for some independent musicians in Toronto.

4.6 The Decline of Social Networking

In the cultural industries where short-term contracts and projects are the dominant structures of employment, networking is essential to find the next source of paid work. Grabher and Ibert (2006) refer to 'sociality' networks as involving the cultivating of weak ties through face-to-face interaction. As Christopherson notes "in New York new media, who you know matters almost as much as what you know, and that, in turn, determines what kind of work you get and how steady it is" (2002a, 2012). More broadly, this maxim is reflected in studies of advertising and magazine publishing (Grabher 2002; Ekinsmyth 2002). The cost of this form of networking is the investment of time, money and energy required to establish and maintain these networks. In fact, project-based workers spend a substantial number of hours networking to find their next job (Christopherson 2002a). Invariably,

however, the accounts in the literature seem to suggest that the costs of networking are outweighed by the benefits they generate for individual workers. Once again these accounts assume that paid work is plentiful if you know the right people, and also that workers have sufficient amounts of 'free time' to devote to social networking.

In both of these respects contemporary musicians in Toronto appear to be quite different. As mentioned, paid work is far from plentiful and the hours required to meet the demands of independent music, including the creative and non-creative tasks described in chapter 2 and chapter 3 leave little time for domestic activities, let alone discretionary 'free-time'. Time spent networking is often calculated as work but as is the case with all entrepreneurs, time spent doing one task, whether that be practicing, recording, designing merchandise or networking is time not being spent on other tasks. As a result, the time many of the musicians in my sample are prepared to invest in networking, at the expense of other tasks, is decreasing. As this musician argues,

It is difficult to balance everything definitely and although networking is important...if I don't take time to practice and be good at what I do, if I don't sound good in the initial performance where people are going to hear me, then nobody is going to hire me anyway. In the end all of these things are many economic decisions. Everybody does these informal cost-benefit calculations. How well you play on the jobs that you have is going to get you way farther in this field. Networking and trying to get extra work, that is much more a long shot in terms of becoming a job in hand so to speak. So if you have a limited amount of time, it is better to invest in practicing and improving your performance, than spending that time hanging out with other musicians and networking. It is going to serve me personally better to spend three hours on Wednesday night practicing in my house, than going to a venue to see a show and trying to network with other musicians. (Interview)

This quote not only suggests that the amount of time musicians spend networking is declining but also that the value some musicians place on the benefits of networking is declining as well. In the informal calculus, in other words, other tasks are now becoming more worthy of their time and attention. As this musician puts it,

Hanging out can get tiring sometimes...I saw there was something, an event on at the Distillery this weekend, and I probably should've gone down to check it out. I should have at least been a little visible and seen other people but it is just so time-consuming and I have had a busy weekend and there is always so much to do. (Interview)

Moreover, as the demands of independent music production spill over into the domestic sphere, networking, which requires long hours and often takes place during evenings and weekends has become increasingly at odds with home and family commitments. Writing about work-life balance and the extensification of work into the domestic sphere, Jarvis and Pratt (2005) explain, for example, that when the constant sum of 24 hours must be shared between work and home, adding to one, depletes the other. As this musician asserts, the potential benefits of networking do not outweigh the cost of giving up family time:

I sometimes wonder if I should network more here in Toronto to do more of this other work in Toronto but the other part of my reality is that I have a family that is important to me too. I want to spend time with my children and my wife. I work long hours as it is... The work that I have is mostly evenings, so the idea of taking another evening off from my family and going somewhere else to do networking starts to seem problematic. (Interview)

To return to chapter 3, many independent musicians have become increasingly isolated from other musicians, both spatially and temporally, and individualized in that they manage their careers and employment risk on their own. As a consequence, some musicians have forsaken traditional forms of social networking altogether and instead prefer to devote as much time as possible to furthering their careers independently. As this musician puts it,

As a band we are doing absolutely everything possible to make it on our own. We have spent \$50,000 over the past two years for all our recording and equipment. And that is out of pocket. We practice or perform five nights a week and we all work part-time jobs...(So in terms of networking) I am in my band and we don't really waste time trying to meet other people... because it is just not helpful. (Interview)

In more extreme cases some musicians refuse to work with 'friends' or social contacts at all. Citing problems associated with lock-in, free riders, and a lack of professionalism, this musician, for example, prefers to work with 'strangers' instead of 'friends':

If we are working together we are not friends. We are collaborators and it ends there. The second you start bringing your personal problems into the work or project, it ruins the whole thing...My rule is that you treat the music end like a business. If we become friends, people get lazy. People get more slack and they don't worry about pulling their own weight. In that sense I think it is better if I spend my whole career working with complete strangers who are going to get the job done. Without any personal attitude or hassle. (Interview)

To varying degrees these findings suggest that the forms of social networking which remain prevalent in other cultural industries are being rendered less effective and valuable for independent musicians in Toronto. I have made two arguments about the changing nature of networking among musicians in Toronto. First, established musicians are restricting the flow of information and access to paid work by concentrating on their strong tie communality networks and excluding outsiders. Second, given the declining amount of paid work, the barriers to accessing that work and the time required to establish and maintain weak tie networks, many musicians are skipping sociality networking altogether. As this musician put it, "Coffee shops? I don't really hang out in coffee shops" (Interview). As communality networks take years to cultivate and sociality networks do not ensure access to paid work, I will now argue that the third response by musicians to technology, restructuring and competition is the shift to what Grabher and Ibert (2006) call 'connectivity' networks. Crucially, this shift highlights the professionalization of independent musicians and the rise of 'just-in-time' forms of networking which occur increasingly in virtual spaces such as MySpace.

4.7 The Rise of ‘Just-In-Time’ Connectivity Networking

The demands of independent music production require individuals to perform a range of creative and non-creative tasks. Despite the overwhelming imperative to be self-sufficient, however, many of the musicians I interviewed struggle to complete these tasks, which can range from web design, sound engineering, marketing and merchandising, on their own. A logical solution to this challenge is to ‘get help’ and there is evidence that musicians are looking for ways to yoke the knowledge, skills and expertise of a growing range of creative collaborators. Although the demands of independent music production increase the impetus for networking, my findings suggest that the composition and logic of these networks is changing. Rather than networking with other musicians who possess similar skill sets, many of the musicians in my sample are now seeking to collaborate with individuals with complementary skill-sets including marketers, fashion designers, visual artists and managers. To complete important tasks, which required skills she lacked, this musician contacted a web designer and a photographer: “I definitely have been involved with some collaborations, for my website, and photographs for the website and press kit” (Interview). Or as this musician explains,

I have recently paid a manager for specific services. I have my own little time and money equation in my head, so it made sense for me to hire somebody to do some work for me. He does specific things like book shows or business planning. He is more experienced and efficient with these things than I am. Plus it looks more professional to have somebody call on your behalf. (Interview)

The importance of this example is that these collaborations are pursued in a strategic way to solve a problem. This musician needed a website and professional photographs, but could not perform these tasks on her own. In chapter 5 I provide more evidence of collaborations between individuals with complementary skill-sets and knowledge bases by examining the linkages between indie musicians and indie fashion designers in Toronto.

The shift to connectivity networking is a response by musicians to the changing landscape of production and consumption. They are enlisting help to perform the tasks associated with independent music production and to develop distinctive products for the contemporary marketplace. Moreover, the strategic and problem solving nature of connectivity networks makes them more suited to mediating risk in this reconfigured landscape.

Beyond the changing logic and organizational structure, however, the shift to connectivity networks also implies a shift to 'just-in-time' networking, which relies on interactions in virtual spaces instead of face-to-face encounters. Several respondents explained, for example, that the demands of indie production and their hectic schedules have made traditional 'hanging out' in coffee shops, bars or other third spaces counterproductive. As a result, face-to-face is being replaced by more targeted and efficient interactions in virtual spaces. As this musician puts it,

I think now it is less of a physical space as it is on the web. I know people who use MySpace and stuff like that...In terms of getting work, I don't think there is any place you can just start going to hang out. It is the Internet, or your website, which has become a digital press-kit or your CV. You can put music and clips and links and stuff on there. (Interview)

Crucially, the broader shift to 'connectivity' and 'just-in-time' networking presents an important addition to the existing work on the importance of proximity in economic geography. While face-to-face interactions are still important for accessing knowledge about paid employment, some musicians appear to be relying as much on electronic interactions. As this music industry insider argues, "You don't have to necessarily be in physical proximity...There is the virtual component of message boards, blogs and file sharing..." (Interview). Musicians use these virtual spaces to promote their shows, interact with fans, recruit new collaborators, learn about music-related tasks, buy and sell equipment

and to distribute their music-related products.³⁸ In particular, many respondents described the important role played by MySpace. As this musician explains,

I think MySpace is a great music resource for musicians because it puts everything in your hands. Within an hour you can set up everything. You can make a profile for your band, add songs that people can listen to, send messages, send out updates about upcoming shows. It is surprising how many people come to shows based on a MySpace post. You just send something like 'we are playing at this bar tonight.' (Interview)

Or as this musician put it, "As soon as I got on to MySpace, that became my main source of finding shows. That is where I network and get the information I need" (Interview). Crucially, MySpace can also help fledgling bands to break into scenes by allowing them to sidestep entrenched gatekeepers who typically exclude newcomers. As this musician points out,

I heard about this new band. I went on to their MySpace and I saw that they have 50 shows booked. The guys are young guys. They haven't been around for that long. So I'm thinking how did they get 50 shows booked? The guy told me that he goes online everyday and just searches for bands and venues to set up shows with. (Interview)

Connecting through virtual spaces allows musicians to not only overcome the entrenched limits of physical distance but also temporal distance as well. Musicians with hectic schedules can use technology to network effectively without being face-to-face. As this musician puts it,

Networking has changed so much. It happens on the Internet. Everyone has got a MySpace page and a Facebook page and who knows what else, and you work a lot of that out in that forum. That's where the hanging out happens... It's not just ... with people all over the world for the sake of it. It is much more strategic... An enormous piece of my schedule is coming home from gigs at 12 or 2 in the morning and spending an hour on the computer answering emails because that is when I have the time. Now I've got an iPhone and I can do it on a break during the gig. (Interview)

³⁸ My findings suggest that the extent to which different tasks are migrating from physical to virtual spaces varies by musician. In some cases musicians reported promoting their shows and products almost exclusively on the Internet while others preferred face-to-face interaction. It is clear, however, that any preference for virtual spaces is not simply a function of age or technological proficiency. Indeed, many older musicians in my sample reported the use of iPhones, laptops, blogs and forums such as MySpace.

Importantly, although virtual spaces allow musicians to network and collaborate with individuals located anywhere in the world, there is still a strong preference and propensity for locally rooted relationships:

With technology you may end up collaborating with somebody in Australia or something. I mean you can easily make a record with somebody in Australia without actually seeing each other these days, and that kind of thing happens. But most collaborations are project-specific and local. It's not just chatting with people all over the world for the sake of it. (Interview)

Indeed, many respondents described forums and blogs, which are technically 'spaceless' as, in fact, locally rooted. This is because musicians can only borrow equipment from people within physical proximity or learn about government grants from people who understand the local institutional landscape. In this way interactions in virtual spaces are not replacing face-to-face interaction but rather facilitating and extending the shift toward connectivity networking.³⁹ As this musician and venue owner put it,

Despite the idea and importance of proximity, the Internet has a crucial role because it is the cheapest and easiest way to distribute and disseminate information, of a promotional nature, of a journalistic nature, blog culture. I think it's interesting that there is a generous overlap between the local physical community and the local electronic community. (Interview)

4.8 Conclusion

In her work, Christopherson (2002a) raises the need to examine the impact of industrial restructuring on the networking practices of individuals. In this chapter I have couched my analysis of networking within the broader context of restructuring in the music industry to argue that some independent musicians are placing more emphasis on certain forms of networking. In particular, I make three arguments. First, that in order to preserve their power and access to paid work, some established musicians are concentrating on their

³⁹ On the whole, interactions in virtual space are not substituting for face-to-face encounters, but individual musicians do appear to make strategic choices about what tasks to perform in each spatial setting. While booking and promoting shows is increasingly done online, for example, most creative brainstorming with collaborators still occurs in person. Beyond personal preference, in other words, many of the musicians in my sample perform each task in the most efficient and effective way possible.

communality networks and excluding 'outsiders.' Second, as independent musicians are spending a greater share of their time and energy performing additional tasks, I argue that social networking is becoming less effective and, therefore, less popular with some musicians. Third, I highlight the increasing emphasis some musicians are placing on connectivity networks and how short-term and strategic collaborations, with individuals who possess complementary skills sets, are helping these musicians to mediate employment risk. By extension, I consider the relationship between the rise of connectivity networking and the propensity for musicians to interact in locally rooted virtual spaces.

Ultimately, the evidence presented in the chapter reinforces the need for more research which critically analyses the inclusive and democratic nature of networks and how technological and industrial restructuring is impacting the form and function of networking for creative workers. Indeed, as music is not the only cultural industry in which workers experience intensifying individualization and competition, similar instances of exclusion and evolving networking practices are likely to be found in other industries as well.

Chapter 5

Collaborating To Compete: The Strategic Linkages Between Independent Musicians and Fashion Designers in Toronto

5.1 Introduction

The market dynamics of the contemporary music industry have been radically altered by technology and restructuring. In fact, the industry's main product, recorded music, has been significantly devalued by illegal downloading and stiff competition from a range of emerging entertainment alternatives such as DVDs, video games, cell phones and the Internet itself. As a result, music producers are attempting to commercialize music through alternative revenue streams such as live performances, merchandise and advertising. In other words, in the post-MP3 marketplace, the fundamental question facing individuals and firms is how to generate revenue from producing music. Despite its centrality to the very survival of the industry, however, few geographers have ventured beyond the causes of the MP3 crisis to explore the aftermath of this crisis and its impacts on the working lives of musicians.

One notable exception is the work by Power and Jansson (2004) who examine the 'Post-Industrial Music Economy' and the changing market for music-related products. The authors argue that in the post-MP3 marketplace, the real money generated from music does not come from selling recorded music in physical or even digital formats, but rather from the sale of music-related products. As evidence, the authors provide a case study of Stockholm's music economy to demonstrate how several firms have been successful in exploiting emerging market demand for goods such as ringtones, virtual music instruments, software and specialized services, including music video production for large American firms.

Although this article established a useful point of departure for examining the ways in which firms operating at the global scale are dealing with these changing market dynamics, no attempts have been made to investigate the impact of these market conditions on the employment experiences of indie musicians or the innovative strategies these individuals are developing to compete in this reconfigured landscape.

In this chapter I endeavor to fill this void by examining the competitive strategies being developed by indie musicians in Toronto. In particular, I argue that some indie musicians are collaborating with locally-based fashion designers to enhance the value of their recorded music, live shows and merchandise in an effort to differentiate their products in the oversaturated marketplace.

I begin by reviewing some key theoretical concepts in the economic geography literature, specifically, the relevance of agglomeration theories for cultural industries, the role of socio-economic forces in constructing cultural scenes, and the recent changes to the production and consumption of music and fashion. The following empirical sections address four interrelated research questions. Why there is a growing need for indie musicians to form strategic collaborations with indie fashion designers? How do indie producers value and exchange goods and services during these collaborations? How are the practices and spaces of networking becoming more professionalized, technologically driven for indie producers? How are cultural scenes and the local spaces they inhabit becoming vital ingredients to cultural products? I conclude by outlining the 'exclusivity model', which is a specific competitive strategy employed by indie musicians to enhance the value of their cultural products.

5.2 Cultural Industries and Urban Agglomeration

Beginning with Marshall's (1997) claim that the high-class performance of industrial districts rests on something 'in the air', economists and economic geographers have tried to explain and identify the features that differentiate specific places. Some stress the importance of the specialization of economic activity as most important (Porter 1990) and these intra-industrial processes are often referred to as "localization economies" (Feldman, 2000). These clustering effects (Porter 1990) are defined as the beneficial outcome of social and physical proximity in vertical relationships in an industry, i.e. key suppliers and buyers. Localized clusters of related firms are also said to form the basis of a local milieu that may facilitate knowledge spillovers and stimulate various forms of adaptation, learning, and innovation. Firms that locate in these clusters are also said to benefit from being close to competitors and horizontal relationships with rivals. Proximity provides access to knowledge from similar firms and the specialized skills and information typical for that geographical area (Asheim 1996; Maskell and Malmberg 1999; Power and Malmberg 2005).

Others claim that in a more diversified regional economy knowledge spillovers are more likely to occur when firms draw new and novel ideas from local firms in different industries. These inter-industry exchanges are often referred to as 'Jacobs' externalities' (Boschma 2005). These are also known as 'urbanization economies', and are defined as "scale effects associated with city size or density" (Feldman 2000, 383).

Within this debate there is a growing appreciation of the role that 'related variety' plays in stimulating knowledge spillovers and by extension regional economic growth (Frenken et al. 2007; Boschma and Iammarino 2009). In this literature it is argued that knowledge spills over more efficiently between sectors that share mutual competences. In this case, cognitive proximity facilitates communication and learning between sectors, firms

and individuals. Inter-sectoral linkages between two related industries such as music and fashion, therefore, are more likely to produce meaningful synergies than spillovers between two unrelated industries. After all, as Boschma and Immarrino point out, “it is unclear what a pig farmer can learn from a microchip company even though they are neighbours” (2009, 292).

Cultural industries benefit greatly from these different externalities. Fashion, in particular, displays a strong set of connections to music (McLaughlin 2000). Built on physical and cognitive proximity, aesthetic production anchors the cultural industries to central cities, and this attracts other talent to these urban sites of creativity (Florida 2002). In other words, there is a certain relationship between place and aesthetic creativity; some cities or spaces exert a stronger centripetal pull for cultural industries than others. For music and fashion we see certain ‘clusters’ of aesthetic expression and when these clusters reach a critical mass, they can be defined as ‘scenes’.

Aggregated consumer preferences also contribute to formation of cultural clusters and scenes. Sophisticated consumers can push the producers to create products of higher quality and can be a source of competitive advantage (Porter 1990). The level and character of demand within the domestic market affects how corporations are created and managed as well as how they grow. Tough competition at home, produced in part by demanding consumers, for example, prepares firms for struggles in global markets (Porter 1990). We find the same mechanisms in the cultural industries, even though the competitive strengths of these firms are rooted in immaterial and/or symbolic features. Within the cultural industries, the very nature of competition is subjective and rooted in symbolic value. Products resting more on aesthetic assets, rather than solely on utility value, are evaluated in social settings. Through signifiers, often rooted in consumption and

material culture, individuals can show their taste and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). Hence, individuals with a high degree of cultural capital can act as sophisticated consumers and help cultural industry actors improve the quality of their product. However, as taste is highly subjective and even contextually dependent, the transfer or export of such products can be challenging. It is by no means certain that the dominant taste paradigm in one location will travel to other places where the products are exported. This means that cultural capital is contextual and spatially dependent. It is rooted in interpersonal relationships and social norms.

5.3 Consumption, Scenes and Symbolic Value

Traditionally, production and consumption have been considered two opposing activities, but with the active involvement and interaction from consumers in the processes of innovation, the borders between these activities become blurred (Grabher et al. 2008; Potts et al. 2008). By actively participating in cultural scenes, musicians and fashion designers co-produce the local stylistic and aesthetic patterns by simultaneously sending and receiving symbolic cues. By extension there is an iterative movement between how people act (both as consumers and as social citizens) and the representation of a place. Moreover, the symbolic value of place is intrinsically bound up within the consumption culture of that place.

Within local cultural scenes, consumer choices are also motivated by the desire to strike a delicate balance between group conformity and individuality, where people try to fit into scenes while also signifying their authentic sense of style. For many of the artists involved in a scene, this authenticity is a very important part of their lifestyle and personal narrative. It can be vital for these individuals to show this belonging through certain signifiers, including badges or symbols that are recognized by insiders but often irrelevant to

the outsiders. Several of these symbols are found in consumer products or other artifacts. By interacting as social individuals, the consumers themselves act to produce the immaterial aspects of cultural goods and services (Power and Hauge 2008). Indeed, immaterial value is not dictated but rather socially constructed (Bourdieu 1984). In other words, symbolic value is not produced by corporate forces alone, but is socially negotiated through reciprocal, socially embedded processes, where the individual consumer plays an important role.

To summarize this section I have demonstrated that the cultural industries have a strong tendency to agglomerate and that this can be partially explained by traditional agglomeration theories, which focus on the benefits of co-location. It is also clear, however, that physical and cognitive proximity facilitates aesthetic and stylistic spillovers between related industries as well. As a result, the inter-sectoral linkages between co-located musicians and fashion designers, produce symbolic value for specific products and the local cultural scenes that contain them. In the next section I explore in more detail, why these linkages are becoming more important and how they play out in the day-to-day business activities of indie producers.

5.4 Collaborating to Compete

History is replete with connections between musicians and fashion designers. The most prominent and lasting of these may be associated with punk. Beginning in London in the 1970's, the designer Vivienne Westwood teamed up with marketer Malcolm McLaren, and together they played an important role as creators of the punk scene. The symbolic facets of fashion were accentuated through McLaren's tenacious effort to link punk's anti-establishment attitude with matching clothes, mainly through his role as manager for Sex Pistols. The result was a fashion style closely associated with the music scene (Hebdige

1979; Breward 2003; Breward et al. 2004). More recent example of these linkages include grunge and hip hop.

In the contemporary music industry, the growing impetus for musicians to collaborate with fashion designers stems from the need to differentiate their products on the basis of something other than sound. As new digital technologies have made it easier to produce recorded music, the marketplace has been flooded with indie musicians and their music-related products. The oversupply of cultural goods with similar styles and quality has resulted in consumers being inundated with choices and looking for a way to differentiate the offerings. Therefore, in the new landscape of music production, getting consumers to buy recorded music and attend live performances is largely based on the ability of musicians to be original and stand out from the crowd. As multi-million dollar mass-marketing campaigns are not feasible for indie producers, however, some entrepreneurial musicians are strategically 'connecting to' and enlisting the services of other creative individuals to enhance the symbolic value of their products. In particular, my interviews reveal that success is predicated on effectively crafting and promoting visual styles that work in tandem with sonic styles.

This manager, for example, explains the importance of the 'whole package',

Musicians (must) remember that their consumers are not only consumers of audio samples. When they walk into a room they are inspired by the visual element, the textile element. They are inspired by the way it smells, just the way everything is, the whole package is why they consume. The website, the graphics, everything... (Interview)

Indeed, several respondents described this 'whole package' as the key to competing successfully in the new marketplace for music. In particular, they argue that visual imagery is becoming an essential component. As this indie label founder puts it,

I think the visual is tremendously important... obviously the music comes first, but

image is second because we are dealing with the media, press and radio, online promotions, and people want to know who the band is. 'What is their image?' (Interview)

Recognizing the importance of visual imagery, however, is only the first step for indie musicians who struggle to perform a range of other creative and non-creative tasks. To meet the challenge of enhancing their visual imagery with limited time and resources, indie musicians seek out creative collaborators to help them develop their stylistic portfolios. In other words, indie musicians 'connect' with collaborators with complementary skill-sets to solve a problem. While these collaborators might be visual artists who work on the album artwork, photographers who work on press-kits, or web designers, who build and maintain websites, my respondents explained that working with local fashion designers was the best way to enhance the visual components of their package. As this musician argues,

Bands need them (fashion designers) so badly because musicians in the city just don't understand that they are not playing behind a wall. They are on stage and people are looking at them, every little thing. It is so visual...People need an image. You can sell an image. You can sell a sound, but it's a lot easier to sell an image. People will listen to it after. (Interview)

This is not a one-way process, however, and as Grabher and Ibert (2006) suggest, connectivity networks between collaborators are based on problem solving and reciprocity. Whereas changes to the production structures of music compel musicians to seek out fashion designers, equally important changes to the way fashion products are marketed have made musicians valuable partners for designers as well. In recent years, traditional mass marketing campaigns for fashion, using TV commercials, billboards and magazine advertisements, have been challenged by alternative marketing techniques, including word of mouth, viral marketing and product placement. This shift is a result of increasing consumer skepticism and has resulted in a shift toward channels of communication, which target individual consumers directly (Walker 2008). In addition, Lloyd (2006) suggests a

growing willingness on the part of large consumer groups to take consumption cues from creative individuals and groups with high levels of cultural capital, and musicians in particular. Not surprisingly, therefore, fashion designers target musicians who exhibit specific lifestyles and images to promote their clothing lines and brands. Examples of these strategies can be found on the global scale, with mega-stars including Madonna designing clothing lines for H&M (Culwell 2007). Increasingly, however, these creative collaborations can also be found at the local scale. Indeed, in the highly competitive marketing landscape, indie fashion designers and fashion firms are developing innovative marketing tools to get their brands and products noticed. This intensifies the need for indie fashion designers to collaborate with musicians.

Collaborations between musicians and fashion designers have traditionally materialized through weak-tie social networks or chance encounters at cafes and clubs. My findings suggest, however, that contemporary collaborations between indie producers constitute examples of connectivity networking as they are increasingly strategic and based on the logic of problem solving. As this manager, whose firm represents indie musicians and indie fashion designers explains, for example, pairing these individuals up is an intentional strategy to compete in the marketplace:

Something that we are doing within our network is pairing up fashion designers that we have with our musicians. We are putting them together to come up with really specific stuff. I am asking the designers to translate the sonic art of the musicians into a marketable visual style. But that also goes for how (the musicians) conduct themselves and present themselves on stage in a visual manner. It is the whole package. (Interview)

Although soliciting well-positioned scene members to wear and promote their products is an effective marketing strategy for fashion designers, overt sponsorship is very rare. This is because credibility and integrity are important for both indie musicians and

indie fashion designers. Even if the designers and musicians are friends and members of the same scene, I was told that if the marketing is too obvious, irreparable damage can be done to the musician and the designer. These relationships, therefore, need to be carefully crafted and deployed with subtlety. This musician, for example, asserts the need to be genuine and to promote her collaborators in a casual way,

Audiences are becoming more skeptical and are able to smell bullshit from a mile away... So if I sponsor somebody, I'll work it in without being cheesy if I believe in it... If someone says 'you're so hot.' I would say 'do you like my outfit? It's by my friend so-and-so'. Or 'look at what my friend made', or 'this is a test outfit what do you think?'... So I'll just try to be genuine. I'll say 'a girlfriend of mine is making some really cool stuff and I like it, so I decided to wear it to my show. It's called this if you like it.' (Interview)

Whether the collaborators are actually friends or just business partners, the transactions are almost always described as favors among friends. As such there is a delicate balance between selling out and helping other members of the scene. In this way even professionalized cultural producers invoke the bohemian ethic as a defense against accusations of 'selling out' or being too business-minded. In other words, indie musicians and indie fashion designers need to brand and collaborate to compete, but they also need to disguise these strategies to make it appear unplanned and organic because 'trying too hard' is not cool. The fact that many indie producers characterize themselves as entrepreneurs and willingly employ such competitive strategies, however, lends further credence to shifts I have outlined in previous chapters. Indeed, new production conditions and intensifying competition in the marketplace for cultural products are severing the links to the traditional spaces and lifestyles of bohemia. So, for example, while Lloyd (2006) explains that bohemians endeavor to isolate themselves from the trappings of mainstream society and the economic systems they loath, survival and success for indie musicians is increasingly predicated on their ability to embrace and operate within the mainstream.

Thus, whether by choice or necessity, many of my respondents engage in a delicate balancing act between harnessing strategic business practices to compete and alienating their peers and fans. Furthermore, in line with the examination of networking in Chapter 4, the structure of these collaborations indicates that the way indie producers value and exchange goods and services is changing as well.

5.5 Beyond Bartering: the valuation and exchange of cultural goods and services

A common assumption is that artists and bohemians, often possess low levels of economic capital but high levels of cultural capital and therefore tend to engage in bartering as the system of exchange (Bourdieu 1984; Menger 1999; Lloyd 2006). Although bartering is the dominant form of exchange, the parameters of the relationships are changing to reflect the professionalization of indie production. In the following section I provide examples of three broad ways in which indie musicians and indie fashion designers exchange goods and services: traditional bartering, adjustable value exchanges and full value exchanges. While I acknowledge that these other forms of exchange are not necessarily new, it is the shift toward these mainstream forms and away from traditional bartering that is of interest.

In traditional bartering arrangements, individuals or groups trade goods and services for free. For example, an indie musician collaborates with an indie fashion designer to create a new clothing line but no money changes hands:

We're doing an exchange where she's designing clothes for me and I get to keep them. I'm her muse for her next line. She's starting a new line and it's based on what I consider when I'm getting dressed for a show... I get to actually discuss with her and have a say into what it's going to look like and I'll be the model for the line, plus she gives me clothes to wear. (Interview, musician)

Despite the lack of monetary remuneration, this musician was satisfied with the gift of free

clothes and the opportunity to provide creative input.

Adjustable value exchange implies the exchange of monetary payment commensurate with the economic and symbolic status of the individuals involved. More established and financially stable producers, for example, often support their collaborators by paying them what is deemed to be a fair value, but this amount can also be lowered if the individual has low economic capital but high cultural capital. As this musician puts it,

I teamed up with this girl 'Hysteria Fairy' and she made clothes for me for a while... She would get a photographer present to take shots of me wearing her clothes for her site and I would receive clothes. I still paid her but there was some bartering because she was doing it for a lot less than it was worth. (Interview)

Another important form of exchange is full value exchange. On the surface full value exchange seems straight forward, exchanging goods and services for full price, but how are symbolic goods and services ascribed a monetary value? How much is a custom-made shirt or an hour of live music worth in the marketplace? Interestingly, the practice of creative collaborators writing cheques to each other for hundreds or thousands of dollars worth of goods and services is also about establishing a sense of professionalism within the arts and this provides further evidence that the ties between indie producers and traditional bohemian conventions are being severed. Indeed, some indie producers simply refuse to barter. In Toronto, for example, this artist manager, who works with musicians and fashion designers, vehemently opposes the barter system of exchange and instead recommends that artists raise the professionalism, confidence and value of their work by paying fairly for any collaborative goods or services. As he explains,

I advise that the value of each artist's work be compensated and that as the value exchange is compensated, it trickles down through the whole process. So when I convince a band like 'Fighter Lover' to pay their designer for the work that was done, and pay fairly, there are a few things that happen in psychological terms. First of all, they are proud of it. Secondly they establish a strong value system for themselves, so now they are less inclined to want to give it away. They expect that exchange in

return because an investment has been made. When this exchange system is in place, relationships last longer, they are more fruitful, they are more formal, they're more inventive. (Interview)

As this quote suggests, there is a growing sentiment among some indie producers that formal and professional arrangements are more efficient, productive and creative. As a result, the motivations and mechanisms of collaborations and exchanges are fraught with tensions, between not only bohemian lifestyles and the forced engagement with the mainstream, but the constantly shifting norms and practices in the marketplace as well. There is evidence of valuation and exchange methods ranging from favors among friends to discounts based on status and full value exchanges that mirror those of other professionals. Although more research on the exact nature and logic of these relationships and exchanges is needed, it is clear that significant changes are affecting these industries. In particular, changing production structures, employment conditions, market dynamics and promotional strategies are impacting indie musicians and fashion designers.

5.6 'Hanging Out' with a Purpose

Much like assessing the nature of the exchanges themselves I am also interested in investigating how the professionalization of indie producers might be changing the structures and spaces of networking. Building on my arguments in chapter 4, I found evidence that the interactions between some musicians and fashion designers are becoming more strategic and efficient. Rather than spending long hours in coffee shops waiting for potential collaborators to appear, indie musicians described the need to aggressively seek out collaborators and schedule meetings to discuss their strategic partnerships. As this musician explains,

We schedule meetings at places like this coffee shop or the print shop across the street. Somewhere that has Internet access so we can hang out and work on our websites, promotional stuff and things like that. This is important because so much of

what we do now takes place on the Internet. (Interview)

Moreover, several respondents explained that although face-to-face interaction was still preferred and that collaborations were much more likely to be made between individuals participating in the same local scenes, several acknowledged the growing importance of virtual channels for networking. These online channels range from email, online forums and blogs to specific virtual environments explicitly meant to facilitate networking such as MySpace and Facebook. As this manager argues,

Collaboration is very important but you don't have to necessarily be in physical proximity because it can also happen in virtual spaces...Working together doesn't mean living on the same street. There are virtual components of message boards, blogs and file sharing that allow artists to share information, files and creative ideas. (Interview)

These new spaces and practices of networking provide further evidence that some indie producers are losing the 'luxury' to pursue traditional bohemian lifestyles and work practices in favor of a more professionalized business culture. Indeed, these accounts demonstrate that unlike the bohemian encounters of chance and the organic process of 'hanging out,' musicians treat networking and collaborations very seriously and set up appointments at venues and third spaces with pre-set goals. By engaging in these scheduled meetings, indie producers could be understood to be 'hanging out' with a purpose. Moreover, we are witnessing the emergence and incorporation of new technologically driven spaces of networking which augment face-to-face interaction.

5.7 Local Linkages: Scenes and Synergies

Local spaces and scenes contain and shape collaborative linkages between indie producers. Just as sonic and visual styles are merged to produce a marketable cultural product, links to local cultural scenes, or more specifically, the characteristics, identities and preferences of those who participate in them, provide a further input and source of

symbolic value to cultural products. These localized scenes are seldom static, however, and styles, trends and the physical sites they imbue display a restless dynamism. In Toronto, for example, even scenes that are closely knit on the basis of style, such as 'indie' rock/alternative fashion, diverge spatially across one of the city's main streets. The hipster haven of 'Queen St. West,' which established itself in the past 10-15 years, is now considered played out by many 'pioneers'. As a result, some of these individuals are now seeking refreshing refuge in the burgeoning arts community along 'Queen St. East' and a neighbourhood called Leslieville, in particular. Thus, as a spatial and stylistic signifier of authenticity and cutting edge cultural consumption, producers link their products with the local scenes. As this fashion designer explains, the products that sell first have a local label,

We have bags with Leslieville on them and they sell out every weekend. All the stores here, except Starbucks, are independent. There is a lot of retro and vintage here. There is definitely a 'DIY' scene here. You can take courses in a lot of different things. There are a lot of hands on creative stuff (Interview).

In a further example of how sonic and visual styles are not only contained within but inspired by physical spaces, this musician who is also a fashion designer described why the 'Bovine Sex Club,' a popular and distinctive bar and music venue along Queen St. West in Toronto, is an 'appropriate venue' for her band:

The 'Bovine' is definitely a 'Satan's Candy' type place and I think that if we started making clothing it would be for people who patronize the 'Bovine.' So if we described our clothing style it would be typical 'Bovine' type of thing, rock and roll....Where you play has to suit your style. (Interview)

Despite the focus on the local scale, the production of scenes has a versatile relationship with space and place, and scenes can be produced both at local and global levels. There is, however, reciprocity between these different sites and scales of production. They are not only dependent on each other but there is also the possibility to export or import aesthetic styles from one place to another. Interestingly, although global subcultures

might appear to be a contradiction in terms, there is compelling evidence that sonic and aesthetic styles travel across space. In a chapter entitled 'Translocal Connections in the Goth Scene,' for example, Hodgkinson (2004) finds a remarkable level of sonic, visual and cultural consistency within different Goth scenes across space. Indeed, his case study magazines, DJ set lists, festivals and Internet forums facilitate the dissemination of Goth styles and products across space.

5.8 The Rise of the 'Exclusivity Model'

There are also a variety of unanticipated trends in the marketplace. One such trend is the resurgent importance of merchandising as a viable revenue stream for indie musicians. At a time when deriving revenue from recorded music and live shows is becoming more difficult, indie producers are employing what I call the 'exclusivity model,' which involves the production of small batches of niche products that can be customized in real-time to reflect the changing tastes and values of the scene. Unlike traditional merchandising campaigns, such as mass produced T-shirts, contemporary indie musicians are adding value to their products by developing, marketing and selling goods and services with high symbolic content to sophisticated consumers in niche markets. Examples of these products include clothing designed specifically for bands and their fans by local designers, or hand crafted CDs with original art work. Indie musicians and fashion designers are also emphasizing the exclusivity, authenticity and 'scene appropriateness' of their products. Taken individually, none of these facets are entirely new. Music related posters and clothing in the 1960's and 1970's were highly imaginative and Andy Warhol started imbuing his art with elements of local New York scenes over 40 years ago. However, these practices are becoming more important in the contemporary marketplace. No longer the domain of innovators like Warhol, the strategic fusion of styles, spaces and scenes is becoming standard practice for

individuals struggling to survive in the reconfigured landscape of independent production.

As this indie label founder explains,

People want to be part of the club. They want to have the limited edition stuff. We have done that with some of our latest releases. We have done releases in vinyl, which had been hand numbered, with hand etchings on the fourth side of the vinyl... So we are selling [limited edition products] at a premium. People start talking about it. It helps promote the album in the live show. You get some buzz going. People start saying 'I was one of the few to snag this new cool album.' (Interview)

The 'exclusivity model' also provides empirical evidence of the assertion by Grabher et al. (2008) that production and consumption within local cultural scenes are becoming increasingly blurred and that by participating in the scenes themselves, indie producers simultaneously drive and react to market demand. By extension, as scene members, indie producers may accrue first-mover advantages by developing and delivering new products with high levels of symbolic value to the marketplace before their less immersed global counterparts.

5.9 Conclusion

Due to the shift in how music is produced and how fashion products are marketed, competing successfully in the overcrowded marketplace is increasingly predicated on the ability of producers to differentiate their cultural products in creative ways. Some indie musicians get fashion designers to enhance the visual components of their stylistic portfolios. Furthermore, increasing competition has forced many indie producers to become more professionalized. This transition has had a number of important consequences related to the ways in which indie producers form collaborative linkages. It also impacts how goods and services are valued and exchanged during these partnerships. The professionalization of indie producers is also changing the structures of their collaborations. For example, traditional bartering, as a method of value and exchange, is

becoming less popular with indie producers and other methods such as adjustable value and full value exchanges are becoming more widely used. Spatially, local spaces are growing in importance, not only the containers of collaborative activity, but also as tangible inputs to the production process in their own right. Linking locally produced goods and services to the ethos of the local cultural scenes is now regarded as a way to further differentiate specific products and imbue them with the symbolic capital bound up within the scene itself. Finally, the 'exclusivity model' is an example of how these other shifts are playing out in the marketplace. This model explains that in an era of uncertainty, benefits accrue to indie producers who can rapidly recognize and react to changing market conditions and consumer tastes.

To conclude, the insights gleaned from this case study of indie musicians may also hold valuable lessons for producers of cultural and traditional products more broadly, particularly for those in industries experiencing dramatic shifts in production structures, marketing strategies and consumer demand. Indeed, as new digital technologies reshape the way cultural products are produced, marketed and consumed, this case study provides evidence that some indie producers in niche markets generate and accrue positive agglomeration externalities. By co-locating and collaborating, indie musicians and fashion designers co-produce both tangible and intangible outputs. Moreover within local scenes, linkages help to produce an intangible infrastructure of authenticity and pools of creative energy. Harkening back to Porter (1990), access to this intangible infrastructure requires physical proximity. However, as I have argued, for musicians and fashion designers, cognitive proximity is also essential. Therefore, in order for meaningful synergies and spillovers to occur and local cultural scenes to grow in size, a critical mass of related economic activity is needed. In Toronto, for example, the continued vitality and development of the city's

cultural scenes can be attributed to the agglomeration of related cultural industries, including film, fashion, music and media. If we apply these findings to the burgeoning creative economy, we might speculate that scenes which are diverse, yet sufficiently cohesive, will be more innovative. They are also more likely to be resistant to market volatility and attractive to talent. In this way they are more likely to succeed and expand. Conversely, scenes with fewer creative activities will generate fewer synergies and be more vulnerable to rapidly changing production structures and consumer tastes. After all, dense and diverse scenes in cities such as New York have proven remarkably resilient over time, whereas smaller and more specialized scenes, such as Seattle's grunge music scene of the 1990's, have declined in the face of constant change.

Chapter 6

Beyond Bohemia: The Professionalization and Changing Spatial Dynamics of Music Work in Toronto

Bohemia is a lifestyle with thematic elements that can be read through very practical instantiations in a range of urban contexts since its Parisian origins. Both the idea of Bohemia and its associated spatial practices have proven durable and portable, which is evident in cities throughout Europe and the United States. But as we will see, each bohemian eruption is both familiar and quite distinctive because of the material and spatial specificities that it encounters in a particular city at a particular time (Lloyd 2006, 54).

6.1 Introduction

Since it was first used to describe the lifestyle of eccentric artists in the 1830's, the notion of bohemia has served to connote alternative living. Today, studies suggest that the geography of bohemia is highly concentrated in large cities (Florida 2002; Lloyd 2006). Even as new bohemian neighbourhoods unfold in a dynamic urban landscape, significant continuity is said to exist between these communities and their counterparts of the past (Lloyd 2006, 69). Indeed, many bohemian spaces continue to be characterized as cheap, gritty, dangerous and isolated. These features are often seen to help attract traditional bohemians, including artists and musicians. As new technologies, techniques and communication networks facilitate creative practice in a growing range of sites, however, these highly concentrated pockets of creativity are spilling-over from downtowns to vernacular spaces in suburbs. In particular, there is evidence that the changing nature of independent music production is becoming increasingly difficult, for some musicians, to reconcile with the romanticized milieu of bohemia.

In this chapter I argue that although creative activity largely remains clustered in the downtowns of cities and many artists still choose to pursue bohemian lifestyles, the employment conditions associated with independent music production have caused some

musicians to reject bohemian spaces. More specifically, I demonstrate that in order to achieve the most favorable balance between the cost, location and characteristics of their live/work spaces, some musicians in Toronto are relocating from the bohemian enclaves in the downtown to locations in the inner and outer suburbs.⁴⁰ In particular, these spaces include ordinary, functional and 'square' houses, basement apartments, converted garages, churches, retail spaces and small recording studios. Moreover, I argue that some of the key features of bohemian living have the potential to hinder the creative process. As a consequence, I suggest that by privileging downtown clusters as the only sites of creativity, existing academic studies and policy initiatives may fail to recognize the increasingly important creative outputs emerging from everyday spaces outside of the core.

The chapter begins by reviewing the traditional connection between artists and the spaces and identities of bohemia. In the following section I review the recent changes in the music industry, which are affecting the working lives and creative preferences of individual musicians. The next section explores some of the factors that serve to 'push' some musicians out of Toronto's bohemian enclaves. The final empirical section provides an analysis of the 'pull' factors currently attracting these displaced musicians to the suburbs. I conclude by considering the implications of this outward flow of creativity.

6.2 The Spaces and Identities of Bohemia

The concept of bohemia emerged in the 1830s to describe the activities and lifestyles of artists and other eccentrics in Paris. Over time bohemian communities have formed in North America in sites such as Greenwich Village and Soho in New York, Wicker Park in Chicago, and Queen West in Toronto. Importantly, though distinct versions of bohemia

⁴⁰ In Toronto rings of automobile-dependent suburbs surround the downtown core. The inner suburbs were constructed between 1946 and 1980 and the outer suburbs have been constructed since 1980 (Noble 2008). Located immediately outside the downtown, the inner suburbs have lower rents than the outer suburbs, although these, too, usually remain more affordable than the downtown.

can be recognized, the characteristics of bohemian spaces and its ideological imperatives exhibit a remarkable consistency across time and space. Indeed, throughout the rich literary history of bohemia, two core themes can be distilled; the marginal nature of bohemian spaces and the staunch rejection of mainstream culture by bohemians.

During the era of Parisian 'proto-bohemia,' artists invaded large cities to escape the countryside and established themselves as an antithetical presence to the mainstream culture of the time. Thus, bohemia was marked by an antagonism toward the ascendant bourgeoisie and the perceived sterility of bourgeois life (Lloyd 2002). Not surprisingly, bohemians identified themselves in sharp contrast to the dominant dispositions of the time and openly flaunted their alternative lifestyles. Grana (1964: 23) explains, that as the centre of entertainment and pleasure,

Paris was bound to attract all those who had come to the city to make a living from its many incidental activities: the floater, the sharp, the playboy and the shadowy entrepreneur – people whose existence was essentially improvised, unconventional, ingeniously opportunistic, full of easygoing list for fun...who, with no outlet for their energies, threw themselves not only into journalism and conspiracies, literature and art, but into the most extravagant excesses and dissipations.

As these bohemian lifestyles are necessarily performed in space, proto-bohemia also establishes the physical spaces and spatial practices which have become synonymous with the lifestyles or 'urban artists.' As Lloyd (2006: 53) notes,

What emerges in bohemia is a milieu that provides aspirants with both material and symbolic supports for the plying of such an uncertain trade, from inexpensive dwellings and tolerant cafes to a local system with rewards that are unhinged, at least partially, from the vagaries of the market.

In this way, the streets and cafes of Paris provided the "template against which was constituted a durable dream of the artist in the city" (Lloyd 2006, 50).

Although subsequent incarnations of bohemia have evolved within the broader context of social and economic change, the dominant anti-mainstream ethos and

connection to marginal urban spaces have persisted. The mid-20th century version of bohemia in the United States, for example, substituted its disdain for bourgeois lifestyles for the sterile and standardized mass culture, which dominated the Fordist era. In particular, artists of the 'beat generation' rejected the mainstream middle class infatuation with "a standardized model of suburban home ownership and gray flannel suit conformity that is the antithesis of a bohemian urban aesthetic. As a result, these urban hipsters and artists constructed urban subcultures in districts such as New York's East Village and Greenwich Village, Los Angeles' Venice Beach and San Francisco's North Beach (Lloyd 2006, 60). For these bohemians, standardization, which was manifested most clearly in the suburbs, threatened to destroy the heterogeneity, individuality, creativity and authenticity of modern life. Indeed, the fear of sanitized and sterile space is articulated by Jane Jacobs' (1961) celebration of the organic encounters that occurred on the dense and diverse city sidewalks in Greenwich Village.

By extension, the standardization of work during Fordism, from the factory floor to the corporate office, only served to cement the divisions between the masses and bohemians who clung to their creativity, flexible schedules and freedom to do whatever they wanted. Throughout time, therefore, the bohemian ethic has been cultivated from a romanticized opposition to the mainstream in which bohemians eschew rational calculations in favor of the arts and the underworld of cities, where individualism is unfettered by traditional checks (Lloyd 2002, 78).

It is clear that the bohemian ethic was incompatible with the standardization that prevailed in the Fordist city, but in recent years creativity has been plucked from the margins and inserted firmly into the mainstream (Florida 2002). Interestingly, Lloyd (2006) suggests that in the current phase of 'neo-bohemia' where creativity has been appropriated

by the mainstream, bohemians struggle ever more rigorously to maintain their individuality, authenticity and freedom. For this reason, contemporary accounts characterize bohemians as attracted to urban and overtly marginal spaces, which are cheap, gritty, rundown and dangerous. Living in the most undesirable and isolated quarters of the city by choice, in other words, continues to signify one's resistance to the mainstream. Moreover, there is a strong connection between these marginal spaces and authentic creativity. Accounts of bohemia, for example, describe artists as embracing the creative stimulus associated with derelict and dangerous spaces and romanticize the notion of 'grit as glamour' (Lloyd 2006).

For the artists in Bain's study of Toronto, the violent backdrop of drunken street fights, homicides and prostitution represents a boundary that isolates artists from mainstream society (2003). More broadly, artists who live in these bohemian neighbourhoods are often characterized as fearless urban pioneers whose courage, tenacity and practicality are celebrated as they carve out live/work spaces in these danger-filled battlegrounds. For instance, in his case study of New York's Lower East Side, Smith makes use of frontier imagery, describing bohemian spaces as a glamorized landscape of frontier danger and savage energy (1996,18).

Accounts of bohemia also explain that artists need to isolate themselves from mainstream society because their temperaments and lifestyles, which include a desire for nonconventional sexual norms, as well as liberal use of drugs and alcohol, which are antithetical to bourgeois conventions. In particular, Lloyd notes that, "the rationalized organization of labour and commerce was anathema to Bohemian sensibilities" (2006, 60). The creative process, therefore, is portrayed as dependent on the stimulation from bohemian spaces and fundamentally incompatible with the banal, standard and 'square' aesthetics found in everyday suburban spaces.

Within these neo-bohemian communities, artists are said to make extensive use of 'third spaces' such as coffee shops to develop creative ideas and network with other artists. As Lloyd notes, the 'Urbus Orbis' coffee shop in Wicker Park, Chicago enjoyed immediate patronage from the nascent arts community in the early 1990's, and provided a site for artists to just 'hang out' while awaiting the lightning bolts of inspiration to strike (2006, 108). As these accounts emphasize the attraction to gritty spaces and the sites of networking we are left with the perception that artists in bohemian communities hang out in 'third spaces', sipping bottomless cups of coffee and going about the creative process in a relaxed state. However, the following section demonstrates that, for some musicians, changing employment conditions are weakening the ties to the spaces and ideals of bohemia.

6.3 The Changing Nature of Employment for Musicians

Musicians are at the forefront of recent changes to the way cultural products are created, distributed and consumed. At the macro-scale, the music industry has been thrust into the digital age and forced to deal with the growing specter of Internet piracy and the protection of copyrights and intellectual property. At the micro-scale, the employment structures for individual musicians have been radically altered by the rise of independent production. Independent musicians are now individually responsible for all of the creative, technical, managerial and business tasks and this has fundamentally altered the way musicians approach their careers. Under the 'indie' model, respondents reported the growing need to become more efficient and professional. Accordingly, creative tasks such as song writing and rehearsing constitute a shrinking fraction of a musician's day. Instead of lounging in coffee shops, ambitious independent musicians work long hours performing

non-creative tasks. As this musician puts it, “People just don’t take into account how much time and effort goes into making music” (Interview).

Beyond requiring musicians to combine their creative talents with new technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, independent production in the digital age also requires high degrees of professionalism, efficiency and organization. However, as these traits and behaviors run counter to the alternative ethos of bohemia, to survive some musicians are being forced to adopt the square, self reliant, standardized and sterile lifestyles closely associated with Whyte’s ‘organization man’ (1956). The changing network ecology of musicians described in chapter 4, for example, suggests that some musicians are becoming more strategic and efficient. With hectic schedules, 24-7 connectivity and blackberries in hand, some indie musicians are losing the luxury of bohemia. They are no longer able to reconcile the demands of independent music production with hanging out in a romanticized milieu.

In addition to these structural changes, technology has also afforded individual musicians unprecedented geographic mobility. No longer tied to the major labels and established sites of music production, such as Los Angeles, New York and Nashville, independent musicians are now free to live and work wherever they choose. While the majority of musicians still choose to locate in major cities, technology allows music production to take place almost anywhere. Being in a central location within the city is no longer essential. As this musician argues, “Proximity is not paramount; you can be in the arctic or anywhere with a wireless connection and conduct your business” (Interview).

With independent production, the working lives of many musicians have become more professionalized and distant from those of traditional bohemian artists. Consequently, a growing number of musicians now resemble business-minded entrepreneurs who make

calculated decisions about their careers, where they live and how they use neighbourhood spaces. Instead of articulating a common penchant for bohemian living, the musicians I interviewed in Toronto based their career and life decisions on different criteria, including demographics, experience, preference, values and life-cycle attributes.⁴¹ As this musician explains,

Years ago there was more homogeneity in how you defined life as a musician. But these days each of us puts things together in such a particular way that our checklists for living and working are very different. (Interview)

6.4 Grit as Grit: The Rejection of Bohemia

My interviews suggest that vibrant bohemian quarters still exist in the downtown core of Toronto and that many musicians and artists still prefer to live in these neighbourhoods. Increasingly, however, the decision to locate in the core is being made for lifestyle considerations, rather than employment or creative requirements. As this musician puts it, it is no longer crucial to live in the downtown to be a musician,

I think living in the city is a personal choice. It is not for music, although seeing shows is good. So there is a distinction between lifestyle and what you actually need to be effective as a musician. So living in the suburbs would not hinder anything musically, but I would be bored. (Interview)

In particular two groups within my sample prefer to live downtown. The first include very young musicians, often from smaller urban settings, who are trying to plug into networks, learn the ropes and make a name for themselves. For these individuals, sacrificing space in favor of proximity is regarded as a necessary trade-off to succeed in their musical careers. This musician, for example, spoke of the importance of connecting to the downtown scenes:

⁴¹ As the arguments presented in this chapter are based on a sample of musicians, I reiterate that these findings may not be representative of all musicians in Toronto. Indeed, my intention is to highlight the ways in which technological and employment change has the potential to redistribute creative activity more evenly across the city-region.

At the beginning stage of a band I think it is really important. Until you meet people and have people working for you, it is really important to be seen and make your mark and solidify yourself. (Interview)

The second group comes from the other end of the spectrum, namely, older more established musicians who have learned to successfully manage the risks of independent music production. For these individuals the preference for downtown living, however, is not predicated on the local buzz or nightlife, but rather proximity to their customary sites of work and collaborators. Moreover, many of these musicians secured affordable and artist-friendly space before Toronto's real-estate prices skyrocketed. Despite living in Kensington Market, one of Toronto's most identifiable bohemian enclaves in the city, the locational choice of this musician was based on proximity rather than any connection to bohemia itself,

I'm an older guy and a privileged guy who owns a house and I have a partner who has got a steady job and between the two of us we were able to buy a house... It's huge. I need that. I need a place to store my equipment, to be able to play, to be able to record, and then be able to get my gigs easily... So this location works for me for my work. My steady gigs are downtown, most of my club gigs and most of my corporate gigs are downtown. When I teach, I teach in my house. Most of the recording I do is either at my house or at somebody else's studio, which is usually close to here. For the work that I do it's much easier for me to do it here. (Interview)

In between these groups, a growing number of musicians, in my sample, reported being disenchanted with bohemian living. For these musicians, the allure of inhabiting decaying urban frontiers had worn off, and the grit, danger and isolation of bohemian spaces were cited as 'push' factors. Crucially, these aesthetics were also described as counter-productive to the creative process and career paths of musicians. As the following sections will demonstrate, the changing nature of employment and increased mobility afforded by technology has caused some musicians in Toronto to rethink their residential and work choices. More specifically, rising rents, overcrowding, competition and the

negative externalities associated with local buzz are pushing some musicians out of Toronto's downtown core and into the city's inner and outer suburbs.

6.5 The Pursuit of Practicality

The artistic requirements of affordable, flexible and centrally located live/work spaces provided the original impetus for the conversion of derelict industrial 'loft' spaces (Zukin 1982). Indeed, interviews with musicians, who originally migrated to Toronto in the mid-1990's, confirm the attraction to affordable space in bohemian quarters and suggest that, for those willing to sacrifice, such space was available within the downtown core. As this musician explains,

The reason why I moved (to this house) was because I got a room, ... like a pantry, it had no heat or a window... my rent was \$150 (a month) for a long time. But yeah, if I had to pay \$800 rent I would have been on the street in two seconds or have had to move back home with my parents in Guelph. (Interview)

As the city's real-estate market has taken off, however, the artistic enclaves located in the downtown core have been increasingly threatened. Consequently some of the musicians in my sample have been priced out of the market. As this musician argues, gentrification in her neighbourhood forced her to relocate from the downtown to the inner suburbs,

I lived in a very roomy apartment for 24 years and it was so spacious, and had a great view, and really cheap rent, but we finally had to leave that and move into this tiny house because the owners decided that they wanted to renovate and raise the price. (Interview)

Despite his desire for a central location, this musician explained that as prices continue to rise, finding suitable and affordable space is very difficult,

I have always wanted to live as close to the action as possible but in the mid-90's it just became too expensive to live downtown so I moved out to the west end, which back then was the wild wild west...I realize that living centrally is kind of a luxury. (Interview)

Beyond proximity to performing venues, however, few participants spoke positively about other quintessential features of bohemia and several musicians commented that they prefer safe and clean spaces in the inner and outer suburbs to the gritty and dangerous bohemian enclaves⁴²:

You can live in suburbia or the outer parts of the city, because downtown Toronto is pretty dirty. There are too many bums and crack-heads. The rent is ridiculous, and it is quieter outside of the city. (Interview)

As another musician puts it, “I would rather live in a safer or nicer area than right where the scene is if it’s really run down or dangerous” (Interview).

The demands of independent music production force musicians to perform business tasks, and engage with mainstream corporate culture. As a result, some independent musicians are being forced to professionalize and abandon their traditional bohemian lifestyles. As this transition occurs, the quotes presented above demonstrate that some musicians prefer quieter, safer and cleaner suburban spaces to bohemian aesthetics found in the downtown.⁴³

6.6 The Limits of Local Buzz

Some of the musicians in my sample are also rejecting the benefits of co-locating in densely populated creative communities. Counter to the logic found in the economic geography literature on the importance of ‘local buzz’ (Bathelt et al. 2004) and ‘being there’ (Gertler 1995) the overpopulation of musicians in Toronto’s downtown core has resulted in a series of negative consequences. My research suggests that Toronto’s live music scenes have surpassed a sustainable threshold and the consumer market is no longer large enough

⁴² While Toronto’s contemporary bohemian enclaves, along West Queen West for example, are in reality much safer than those of American cities, the perception of danger and grit is always relative to the experience of the individual. As a result, the important point is that these musicians perceive the suburbs to be safer and cleaner and express a preference for these considerations.

⁴³ Outside of young newcomers and well-established musicians, who are financially secure, the locational preferences of musicians in my sample, regardless of genre, were fairly uniform. As I argue throughout the chapter, there was a strong preference for affordable space that offers easy access, via public transit, to sources of employment.

to support the number of musicians working in the city. Competition for the few well-paying employment opportunities is intensifying and many musicians, who already earn low incomes, are being forced to either play for free or worse, pay the venue owners to get on stage. These conditions are exacerbated by changes to the revenue structure of the music industry at the macro-scale, where declining sales of recorded music in physical (CD) and digital formats (MP3) have placed an increased importance on the revenue derived from live performances. As the following musician points out, low barriers to entry are allowing musicians to flood the market for live music in Toronto, and as a result finding steady and decent paying gigs is increasingly difficult;

It is common to not get paid or to have to pay to play, which of course makes no sense at all. Now (after three years) we are getting paid more consistently but it is a maximum of \$50 or \$60 dollars divided amongst the members in the band. That does not even really cover the cost of equipment and rehearsal time. Usually it will buy you dinner for that night, and maybe the gas to get to the show. (Interview)⁴⁴

Some of the musicians I interviewed also reported that too much 'buzz' is, in fact, a hindrance to productivity and the creative process. In the new era of independent production the free time once available to experiment creatively and indulge in the 'rock star' lifestyle appears to be lost. As a consequence, dedicated indie musicians spoke of the danger of being sucked into projects and lifestyles that, in such a competitive climate, might derail their career goals. This musician, for example, saw his fledgling music career thwarted by a 'rock-star fantasy' and cocaine addiction,

⁴⁴ While low pay has been a hallmark of musical careers, the myriad impacts of technology are exacerbating the situation in Toronto. As Figure 1.1 clearly demonstrates, the number of musicians in Toronto has continued to increase even as incomes are declining. As record sales decline live performances have become the primary source of income. However, the oversupply of musicians competing to 'get on stage' has driven down the value of live music in the marketplace. Moreover, my findings suggest that as musicians become individualized and pitted against one another, the union (the Toronto Musicians Association), which has traditionally bargained for and enforced 'scale wages,' is now powerless to prevent desperate musicians from performing for free or even paying venue owners to get on stage. According to union representatives this decrease in power is a result of dwindling membership and solidarity. Although all musicians, regardless of genre or training are eligible to join, the benefits of membership have become less relevant for freelancing indie musicians (obtaining industry contacts, legal advice on record contracts or scale wages for jingle recording sessions, for example).

There is a partying lifestyle that comes with being a musician in a band...There is late night stuff, drinking, drugs...you can get sucked into the party atmosphere as an entertainer...I fell victim to it. (Interview) ⁴⁵

Lloyd indicates that musicians in Wicker Park, Chicago exhibited a strong connection to the drinking, drugs and partying that make up the 'rock star' lifestyle (2006). The comments of this musician and others I spoke with, however, further illustrate that to succeed in the reconfigured landscape of independent music production, bohemian lifestyles, which are devoid of structure, responsibility, hard work and self-restraint, must be abandoned. The next section will demonstrate that the flight of some musicians from the spaces of bohemia is not random. A range of pull factors, including more affordable and artist-friendly space, better employment opportunities, greater control over their work/life balance and isolation from career sabotaging temptations are attracting some respondents to spaces in the inner and outer suburbs of Toronto.

6.7 The Redistribution of Creativity

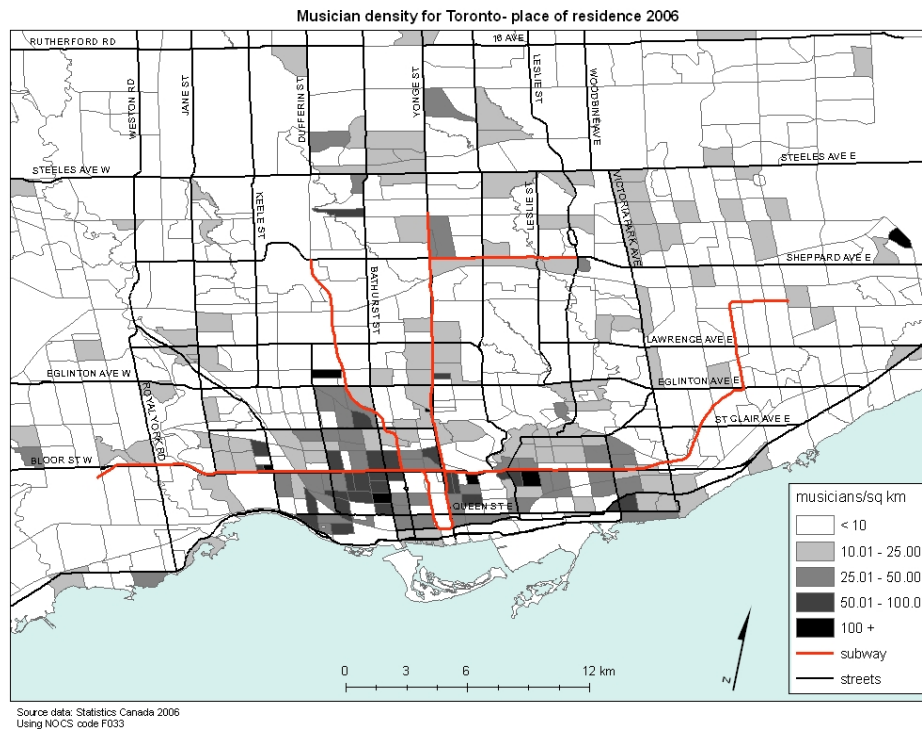
Just as the quest for cheap space helped to establish Toronto's original bohemian enclaves, as real-estate values in the downtown core continue to rise, affordable space is now attracting low-income musicians to the inner and outer suburbs. In Figure 6.1, which shows the density of musicians in Toronto by place of residence for example, it is clear that musicians are not exclusively clustered in the downtown core and can be found in many neighbourhoods throughout the city.

Many of my participants complained about the costs of independent production and paying for equipment and advertising. Finding cheap or even free space also emerged as the a prominent factor for musicians. Moreover, as some of these musicians leave Toronto on

⁴⁵ It may be tempting to assume that the rejection of late night partying and drugs simply occurs with age, but my findings suggest that even musicians in their early-twenties are recognizing and avoiding these distractions.

tour for long stretches during the year, a further goal was to avoid paying high rents for unused space.

Figure 6.1: Density of Musicians by Place of Residence (2006)



The strategy of this musician was to move out of the bohemian inner city neighbourhood of Queen West in Toronto and relocate to Oakville, a suburban community of within easy commuting range of Toronto;

I used to live in Queen West, but in January I moved home with my parents, because I spend most of January and February on the road. I'm going to be gone for most of May, so I need to save money and stuff like that. So I've been commuting back and forth from Toronto to Oakville. (Interview)⁴⁶

This hip hop musician, who lives in a suburban community with no connection to the hip hop scene demonstrates that even hip hop artists, who are described in the literature

⁴⁶ This quote also highlights the important role parents play in supporting musical talent. Crucially, the evidence from my sample reveals that this support comes in a variety of forms including start-up loans for equipment and recording, vehicles for performing and touring and access to cheap or free live/work space. Although further research on these relationships is needed, several musicians reported staying in or moving to the suburbs to take advantage of subsidized space and support provided by their parents.

(Forman 2000) as having the strongest connection to locally rooted scenes, value the affordability of space,

I think a lot of musicians...are working 9-5, so they're maybe living in an apartment or a lot of times living at their parents homes. It's like they're just trying to survive. But it's also funny because if you think of a lot of New York rappers, a lot of them don't live in Brooklyn and Queens like they say on their songs. Most of them live in New Jersey because that is where you are going to be able to afford a house. I'm up in the 'burbs', but I can still access the city by going to Scarborough. (Interview)

Once again unlike the bohemian notion of living and working within isolated artistic communities we see that what really matters is the ability to access specific spaces in a 'just in time' fashion. Musicians can live anywhere as long as they can still get to their gigs, meetings and secondary jobs. In terms of accessibility the best locations are described as being centrally located, often in the inner suburbs, with good access to public transit. As this musician argues,

[After moving out of the downtown] we chose this site because it was the cheapest house we could get within the city limits. I didn't want to move to Whitby (outer suburb), because I would have spent too much time traveling... Sometimes, however, there are a lot more work opportunities in the suburbs then there are in the downtown area of Toronto. There is so much competition, and they are fighting for fewer and fewer jobs. All the weddings, they are all in the suburbs anyway, banquet halls and golf courses. So as long as we can still access places like the Drake and the Rex (venues in downtown Toronto) that is all that matters. I think places like Mississauga and North York (closer suburbs) might be better places to live and work. (Interview)

These quotes indicate the decision making process of the musicians I interviewed and highlights the importance of finding affordable and accessible space. Musicians also reported being attracted to suburban spaces because the built form is flexible and therefore, more conducive to the creative process. In addition to needing enough space to store their equipment and hold rehearsals, for example, musicians also need to be able to make noise, often outside of the 9-5-work day. Interestingly, musicians also require silence to create. For these reasons some musicians prefer larger more isolated spaces in the suburbs to small,

crowded apartments in the city with sleeping neighbours next door. Indeed, this musician, moved to the outer suburb of Keswick after twenty years of living in downtown Toronto in order to make noise and concentrate on the creative process,

This is the twist, as a musician I make a lot of noise, which is bad enough, but I also need to live somewhere where there isn't a lot of noise, because I can't deal with that noise. I can't be creative with that noise. I need that silence to be effective and to focus on what I'm doing. I also need the peace and quiet just to rejuvenate myself from the stress of my working life. (Interview)

In terms of the creative process itself, scholars including Jane Jacobs (1961) and Richard Florida (2002) have long argued that the high population density, short blocks and pedestrian access found in the downtown helps to facilitate the interactions that support creativity, and that in contrast, postwar suburbs are the very definition of an uncreative urban form. Moreover, there is an assumption that the suburbs lack the inspiration and 'authenticity' found in the downtown core. As this musician explains, however, the banal nature of suburbia itself can serve as creative inspiration,

The title of our first album, Parking Lot, that sums it up right there...The fact that I come from a place where there is nothing to do and a place where there is no music and where people are against what we are doing is my muse, it is the reason I write and started playing music in the first place...I didn't belong so I invented my own thing to do, purely influenced by my surroundings. (Interview)

Furthermore, another musician balked at the assumption that creative or original music could not be produced in the suburbs and gave evidence of local bands in the outer suburb of Keswick creating meaningful new musical forms,

We are a Keswick band and there is definitely a Keswick sound...There is this whole thing of art rock being mixed in with 'Emo' music in Keswick, that is sort of the sound which is coming out of there right now. Which is really kind of interesting. (Interview)

Despite their apparently sterile aesthetics, therefore, suburbs such as Keswick can, in their own way, act as sources of new ideas, styles and creativity.

Perhaps even more important than the ability to facilitate the creative process and provide affordable and flexible space, Toronto's suburbs allow some struggling musicians to sustain their creative passions by providing better employment opportunities. Toronto's downtown core is saturated with an oversupply of musicians, which is limiting the amount of paid employment. In contrast, the markets for live music in many outer suburbs remain untapped. For example, this musician contends that playing shows in the outer suburbs and smaller towns in the periphery often generates better fan attendance and income precisely because the market is not saturated with musicians and other entertainment alternatives;

The music scene in the slightly less populated areas, north of the city is getting to be really good...In the Northern areas, the kids have less to do, there are fewer entertainment options for them, in Toronto there are one million things to do, so if there is a live band, those kids are gonna go, so you can sell tickets easier. The highest turnouts to any of our shows have all been in Newmarket and Keswick (both outer suburbs of Toronto). (Interview)

As these findings suggest, my respondents make spatial choices based on their own unique set of criteria, with the goal of achieving the optimum balance between a range of factors. Most notably, these include the affordability, accessibility and the artist-friendliness of the physical space as well as the availability of paid work.

6.8 Conclusion

Existing accounts characterize bohemia as both highly concentrated and uniform across time and space. More broadly the literature constructs a stark dichotomy between the downtown core and the surrounding suburbs. The core, which is said to provide 'authentic', 'alternative' and stimulating energy, is regarded as the spiritual home of the creative process, and thus the domain of artists, musicians and other bohemians. In contrast, the suburbs are depicted as sterile and banal spaces populated by 'square' professionals who are anything but creative. As I have argued, however, the demands of

independent production in the digital era are forcing some musicians to abandon bohemia. I have demonstrated that the lifestyles of some independent musicians are moving closer to those of mainstream professionals and that a range of push and pull factors, including the quest for affordable space and employment opportunities, have resulted in some musicians leaving the core and relocating to spaces in the inner and outer suburbs. These suburban spaces, parents' houses and basement apartments, for example, are more than just cheap containers of creative activity. They serve to catalyze the creative process. The findings presented in this chapter raise some important questions about the evolving nature of creativity in the digital age. Indeed, the results of this micro-scale case study lend further credence to the mounting criticism directed at academic inquiry and government policies which privilege visible clusters of creative activity in the downtowns of cities and neglect their invisible counterparts in the suburbs.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Working in the Creative Economy

There is something positive about all of this. The decline of the record industry and the rise of indie prove that even though industries come and go and the means of production and distribution may change, music is not going away. People will still find a way to do it. (Interview with music producer)

7.1 Overview

This dissertation explores the employment experiences of independent musicians in Toronto, in order to shed light on the nature of work in the creative economy and the impact of digital technologies on work. As outlined in chapter 2, digital technologies have democratized the music industry in a number of important ways. Once the exclusive domain of specialized and capital-intensive recording studios, inexpensive computers, software and equipment allow recording, editing, mixing and mastering to be performed in home studios. Thus, the amount of capital and skill required to produce music has been drastically reduced. Digital technologies have also allowed musicians to enter the world of marketing and distribution for the first time. Using the Internet, independent musicians can now cheaply and easily set up websites to promote and distribute digitally recorded music tracks in MP3 format. In essence technology has lowered entry barriers, reduced the dependence on major labels and created a new geography of music production. As a result, digital technologies have ushered in a new era in which independent music production has gone from a niche alternative to the dominant model. Recognizing the importance of this new model, I examine the employment structures and spatial dynamics associated with contemporary independent music production. By combining the literatures on employment risk and governmentality, I investigate the extent to which digital technologies expose independent musicians to new forms of freedom and risk.

My analysis of the employment of independent musicians suggests that they now operate as entrepreneurial agents. Self-motivating, these workers are responsible for performing a variety of creative and non-creative tasks on their own. On the one hand, independent musicians enjoy unprecedented freedom to manage and direct their musical careers. Digital technologies have unshackled independent musicians from the traditional sites of music production such as New York, Los Angeles and Nashville. This has furnished workers with the spatial freedom to live and work almost anywhere. On the other hand, this freedom produces risk. To seize new opportunities, musicians must first overcome a new and dynamic range of challenges and barriers to success.

Far from realizing the promise of unprecedented freedom, therefore, many musicians actually experience less freedom than they did under the major labels. In fact, on some levels the demands of independent music production, employment risk and the neoliberal imperative to be economically rational and self-sufficient reduce the creative freedom and potential of musical talent in Toronto. As I demonstrate in chapters 2 and chapter 3, the structures and imperatives of independent music production force musicians to multi-skill and de-specialize, and this corrodes their creativity. Many of the musicians I interviewed reported a compulsion to prioritize business tasks and as a consequence end up spending less time and energy on creative tasks such as song writing and rehearsing. In other words, digital technologies, market competition and structure of work constrain the freedom of these musicians to pursue their creativity.

In addition to highlighting the corrosion of creativity, I argue that contemporary independent musicians are moving 'beyond bohemia.' As I elucidate in chapter 6, competing as a self-sufficient entrepreneur, in the reconfigured landscape of music production, requires a high degree of professionalism and engagement with mainstream

business practices. As a result, many of the independent musicians in my sample are abandoning traditional bohemian values, practices and spaces. Throughout the dissertation, I outline some of the specific causes and consequences of this apparent shift.

In chapter 4, I argue that the intense competition for paid work in Toronto's live music scenes is altering the network ecologies of these workers. Traditionally open and inclusive music scenes, for example, have become increasingly closed and exclusionary. In particular, some established musicians are attempting to protect their access to the dwindling supply of paid work by excluding newcomers. As a result, new musicians find Toronto's labour market and networks increasingly difficult to penetrate and plug into. I also argue that social networking and 'hanging out,' often held up as quintessential strategies creative workers employ to find work, are becoming less useful to independent musicians. These findings support the argument that musicians in Toronto are becoming individualized.

In addition to de-emphasizing the bohemian practice of 'hanging out,' some independent musicians are also abandoning bohemian enclaves in the downtown core. Interestingly, the aesthetics which have typically attracted artists; grit, danger and isolation no longer resonate with many professional musicians. Moreover, many of the independent musicians in my sample eschew the rock star lifestyle of alcohol, drugs and late night partying.

The corollary of the shift away from bohemia is the increasing penchant for some independent musicians in Toronto to pursue much more practical spaces, practices and lifestyles. The rise of connectivity networking, in which musicians seek out collaborators to solve problems, stands out as a prime example. Not only are these collaborations increasingly forged and carried out in virtual spaces, but the traditional barter system of remuneration is being challenged by full value exchanges as well. As I argue in chapter 6,

these musicians are increasingly relocating to spaces in the inner and outer suburbs. Crucially, these spaces are more affordable, conducive to creativity, and offer access to a greater range of employment opportunities. The downtown and inner city remain important sites of creativity and music production, but a wider range of locations need to be considered.

Although I pay significant attention to the ways in which independent musicians experience and negotiate risk, this dissertation also considers how these musicians make a living in the contemporary marketplace. In spite of fragmentation, the corrosion of creativity, and intense competition, the findings presented in chapter 5 highlight one potential pathway to success. To add distinctiveness and value to their goods and services, innovative musicians endeavor to enhance their stylistic portfolios. In particular, independent musicians are collaborating with independent fashion designers to develop the visual components of their products. Moreover, I demonstrate that localized scenes are also being incorporated as symbolic inputs and signifiers of exclusivity (a strategic process which adds even more value to music-related products).

A Word On Policy

In today's world, creativity is a necessity – a must have, not a nice to have. There is a direct link between a flourishing city and the vitality of its creative sector (City of Toronto 2006).

As creativity and innovation are recognized and celebrated as important economic engines, a growing number of cities now compete to attract and retain the talented individuals who catalyze these activities. In this global competition, however, not all strands of talent are equally valuable. For instance, while software engineers and biochemists develop meaningful new products, musicians contribute to the economic and social prosperity of city regions in myriad ways (Florida 2002). Illustrating the economic

importance of a robust music economy, Hyatt (2008) reported that the retail sales of recorded music in Canada totaled \$703.7 million in 2006; the gross revenue in Canada for live musical performances in 2005 was estimated at \$752.8 million. Musicians not only generate value from music-related products and add value to related cultural products, but they also help to attract and retain other strands of talent by producing dynamic and vibrant music scenes.

Musical talent contributes to the social fabric and attractiveness of city-regions by creating vibrant music scenes. Working in tandem with other cultural amenities, music scenes enhance the quality and authenticity of place; thus they play a role in attracting and retaining broader strands of talent (Florida, 2002). In Ontario, for example, 47 percent of individuals surveyed by Hyatt (2008) indicated that they had attended live musical performances in the previous year. As talent magnets, musicians and the scenes they create provide assets for cities locked in a global competition for talent.

Although Toronto excels at attracting musical talent, the city is less successful at incubating and ultimately retaining these individuals. The precarious nature of independent music production and the intense competition within Toronto limits the ability of these workers to create meaningful and sustainable careers for themselves. In particular, musicians in Toronto struggle to cultivate business and technical skills, plug into networks and find enough paid work. They also struggle to connect with creative collaborators who work in the city's other creative sectors, including, art, film, fashion and design. How can government policy address the current lack of opportunity, connectivity and skill development for musicians in Toronto?

My findings suggest that the city should focus on three elements that independent musicians need: skills, space and financing.⁴⁷ In the remainder of this section I provide specific suggestions as to how these three areas can be addressed.

As digital technologies reduce the costs and requirements of independent music production, soft infrastructure has become more important than hard infrastructure. Musicians no longer require large capital-intensive studios to produce music. However, they do need the business skills to market, promote and distribute music. Despite the recent introduction of expensive professional programs at Trebass Institute and Harris Institute for example, the majority of independent musicians obtain these crucial skills through the process of trial and error. What is needed, therefore, is a system of specialized and continuous learning opportunities through which musicians can access the training they need, when they need it. If musicians could access a menu of workshops on topics such as writing grant applications, home recording, web design, marketing, merchandising and tour planning, they could spend more time applying these skills instead of acquiring them in a more piecemeal way.

To operationalize this model of skill development, the City of Toronto should draw on its experience in the fashion sector. In fashion, the city established a specialized business incubator called the Toronto Fashion Incubator (TFI). Originally formed in 1987, this incubator was the world's first and has been very successful. Essentially the TFI is a specialized small business centre which supports and nurtures new fashion entrepreneurs. The TFI does this by allowing fashion start-ups to learn the business of fashion through workshops on business planning, mentoring, sector-specific education, sales and marketing. The incubator also provides access to important physical resources such as shared

⁴⁷ Several of my policy recommendations echo those found in the Imagine a Toronto report (City of Toronto 2006).

workspace and in-house design studios. Although the number of fashion designers the incubator can support with residencies is low, the TFI has an extensive network of members to whom it provides online resources and training workshops via webcast. Thus, opportunities to learn, network and collaborate are not solely based on physical proximity, in other words, and this reflects the needs and work structure of independent fashion designers.

It is clear that a music incubator based on the successful model of the TFI would greatly benefit Toronto's independent musicians. Indeed, the idea was first raised in 1993. Over the years, the concept has developed into the proposed Metronome project on Toronto's waterfront. After reviewing the Metronome project, however, I see a substantial disconnect between the scale and purpose of this facility and the actual needs of typical working musicians in Toronto.

Figure 7.1: Proposed Design for 'Metronome, Canada's Music City'



According to the plan, for example, the Metronome will house an 800-seat performance venue, a music museum, offices for the music industry, music-themed restaurants, a

children's playground and retail shops. For established Canadian musicians like Neil Young or Bryan Adams – both of whom are highlighted in the plan – the major labels, and a certain cohort of music fans and tourists in Toronto, the Metronome offers great benefit. There is, however, little if any direct provision and benefit for Toronto's independent musicians. Moreover, assuming the \$50 million project secures financing, which according to its directors has been an enormous struggle, construction on the Metronome would take a minimum of three years to complete. In other words, fledgling musical talent in Toronto should look to an alternative vision to find the specialized training and support they require.

As an alternative or compliment to this relatively inaccessible flagship development, the City of Toronto could create a series of much smaller multi-purpose spaces in the neighbourhoods where independent musicians actually live, including suburban sites. According to many respondents, these spaces are already developing organically. Old churches and schools are being turned into community centres which provide studio, rehearsal, performance and collaboration space for musicians and other artists (see also Bain 2010). The addition of government funding would surely enhance the development of these important spaces. The *Imagine a Toronto* report (2006), for example, suggests transforming the city's network of thriving community centres into creative community hubs.

In chapter 6 I elucidate the important role that affordable and artist-friendly spaces play in sustaining and advancing the careers of independent musicians. I also draw attention to the threat that a rapidly increasing cost of living poses to Toronto's ability to attract, incubate and retain flows of musical talent. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Toronto's policy makers to understand and plan for the specific needs of the city's musicians. Although cities such as Montreal have been able to control the cost of living in their artistic

quarters⁴⁸, the City of Toronto seems unwilling or unable to protect its musicians from the pressures of redevelopment and gentrification (Hracs 2007). As I demonstrate in chapter 6, some musicians are migrating to live and work in the suburbs. Therefore, I submit that if the city truly values the presence of musicians in the downtown core, it should support organizations such as Artscape⁴⁹, which provides affordable live/work spaces in new and redeveloped buildings. If, on the other hand, the city is content to watch musicians relocate to the inner and outer suburbs, it should allocate supports and resources spaces outside of the core.

As the demands of independent music production take hold, it becomes clear that three specific types of space need to be created in the downtown core and the surrounding suburbs. The first are small performance venues (with between 100 and 150 seats). Many respondents complained about the lack of appropriate venues for smaller performances and how this intensifies the competition for paid work in Toronto. In particular, there are no dedicated all-ages venues in the entire city, and this severely limits the ability of fledgling musical talent to develop their music, performance skills and fan bases. Interviews with venue owners suggest that complications related to selling alcohol reduce the profitability of all-ages venues. As a result, the City of Toronto has a real opportunity to create non-profit facilities to help incubate the next generation of forward-thinking musical talent.

The City of Toronto should also create connectivity or what the *Imagine a Toronto* report (2006) call 'convergence centres' to bring together creative workers with similar and complementary skills sets and experiences. As I argue, musicians often struggle to plug into

⁴⁸ Cheap rents in Montreal are enforced by a policy of rent control that limits rent increases each year (Cummins-Russell 2009).

⁴⁹ The *Imagine a Toronto* report (2006) argues that artists and creative people are routinely priced out of specific neighbourhoods. The report also celebrates the efforts of Artscape to create affordable live/work units in Toronto. Importantly, by drawing attention to the extremely long waiting list for these units, the report highlights the urgent need for much more accessible and workable space for artists.

networks, access resources and connect to potential collaborators in Toronto's other cultural industries. Musicians would greatly benefit from 'club houses' that facilitate networking and collaboration (see also Markusen, 2010). To achieve maximum benefit, these spaces should be located in the neighbourhoods where musicians live and work (the downtown core and the surrounding suburbs). In addition to physical spaces, the city should provide virtual spaces to disseminate information about living and working as a musician in Toronto. The City of Toronto already offers a range of specialized services for immigrants. There is a new immigrant portal, for example, that provides important information and links to help newcomers plug in and connect. A similar initiative for musicians would help incoming musical talent to plug in, advance their careers and establish roots in the city. As developing a sense of community deters musicians from leaving these spaces of connectivity will increase Toronto's ability to incubate and ultimately retain its hard won musical talent.

Special parking spots for musicians represent a third 'micro' space where there is an opportunity for policy intervention. Currently, musicians face the dilemma of parking in front of venues to unload their equipment, which often results in tickets, or parking in designated areas and hauling their equipment through busy streets. Respondents complain that the cost of parking and tickets eats into the low wages they earn from performing and impedes their ability to work. One potential remedy for this situation is the creation of special unloading zones for musicians in front of venues, along Queen Street, for example. According to several respondents, the City of Austin, Texas has implemented such a policy with great success. As with convergence centres, the creation of special spaces for musicians would signal that the city understands the needs of musicians and values the contributions they make, and thus would help to retain musical talent.

Although independent musicians are essentially small businesses, my findings demonstrate that creative entrepreneurs do not follow traditional business models (see also City of Toronto, 2006). Therefore, the City of Toronto should support these entrepreneurs with specialized financial policies. Two concrete suggestions would be tax reform and flexible start-up loans. Like all entrepreneurs, musicians do not have access to firm-based health and pension benefits. Income uncertainty also means that most musicians are not eligible for employment insurance. Typically, the risk and expense of self-employment is offset, to some extent, through tax deductions. However, according to many respondents the allowable deductions for equipment, touring and other business expenses have been curtailed in recent years. In other words, just as the demands of independent music production force individuals to personally incur more responsibility, risk and expenses, the tax system is cracking down on them. As the current tax code contributes to the outflow of musical talent, the city should provide tax breaks at the municipal level and lobby the Federal and Provincial governments to amend their tax codes. In particular, musicians would benefit greatly from being recognized as entrepreneurs and the ability to not only deduct their legitimate business expenses, but use income averaging to negate the extra taxes they currently pay due to incomes that fluctuate wildly from year to year as well. Another way in which the city could help incubate musical talent would be the provision of low interest loans.⁵⁰ In the absence of major labels, independent musicians are forced to secure start-up capital from the private financial sector. Many respondents reported paying extremely high interest rates and dealing with credit card debt to keep

⁵⁰ An exemplar of this can be found in Montreal where SODEC provides specialized financing to cultural producers (Leslie and Rantisi 2006).

their businesses afloat. What these musicians need is access to government loans with low interest rates and flexible terms of repayment.

City initiatives that improve the ability of independent musicians to access skills, space and financing will greatly enhance Toronto's ability to attract, incubate and retain musical talent. I argue that the first step to valuing musicians as important actors in the broader economy is to understand and support their unique needs.

When thinking about policy initiatives at the Federal level, my research suggests that independent musicians would benefit greatly from a revised system of work permits. Currently, Canadian musicians entering the United States to perform live shows, must pay for work visas to legally cross the border. According to several respondents, the cost of these visas which range between \$1,000 and \$1,500, hinders their ability to make money from touring. It does not make sense to pay \$1,000 to cross the border, for example, if you only earn a few hundred dollars in income. In response many musicians try to cross the border illegally. If caught, however, musicians run the risk of having their vehicles and equipment impounded until they can produce enough money to pay for the visa and the additional fines. As Canadian and American musicians engage in essential, yet ultimately low paid, cross-border touring, the Federal government of Canada would be wise to amend its border agreements. More specifically, the Federal government could eliminate the flat rate for work visas in the case of musicians and instead require musicians returning home to pay a percentage tax on their earnings. Such a measure would recognize the needs and employment characteristics of independent musicians and allow greater access to the geographically concentrated and lucrative American marketplace.

The Future of Creative Work

How this kind of activity will work out in the post-welfare society remains to be seen. How much of the labor market can culture mop up? What kind of living is there to be made in this cultural society? Are we witnessing the emergence in Britain of a new kind of low-paid, labor-intensive, cultural economy comprising of a vast network of freelance and self-employed creative people? What sort of issues for government will be thrown up by the emergence of this kind of workforce as a long-term phenomenon? Are they all dutifully paying their national insurance stamps? Have they already attended to their private pension plans? How does self-employment tally with the high cost of parenting?... What all these performers (including the twelve year olds in their bedrooms) have in common is the possibility of producing cheap music by having access to sophisticated home-based computer equipment (McRobbie 1999, 136).

Writing in 1999, at the cusp of the MP3 Crisis, Angela McRobbie poses several insightful questions about the changing nature of work in the music industry. By outlining the specific structures and imperatives of independent music production, the findings of this dissertation provide some interesting answers. In particular, they highlight the role technology plays in altering the demands and spatial dynamics of contemporary independent music production, making it fundamentally different from earlier incarnations. In so doing this study adds nuance to McRobbie's analysis of creative entrepreneurs and transports it into the digital era. By extension, the critical interrogation of networking reveals the complex and dynamic factors which influence the motivations, mechanisms and locations of interactions between independent musicians. By exposing the implications of intensifying competition for musicians in Toronto, this study lends empirical weight to those who assert that networks are not universally positive and democratic. In addition, the dissertation goes beyond the macro-scale to shed light on the intra-urban flows of creativity and the micro-geography of musical employment at the neighbourhood scale. Crucially, the findings challenge some key assumptions relating to the primacy of the downtown core, the importance of local buzz and the inspirational qualities of urbanity. Perhaps, most

importantly, this dissertation goes beyond simply describing the precarious employment conditions of independent musicians to actually consider the ways in which these individuals can improve their economic prospects in the future. Indeed, significant attention is paid to how musicians can generate value against the backdrop of declining record sales and compete in the reconfigured marketplace for cultural products.

Despite these useful contributions, however, the findings presented in this dissertation raise more questions about the future of work in the music industry and the creative economy more broadly. What outcomes will the professionalization of independent musicians ultimately produce? How will networking and the use of virtual spaces evolve in the future? Will musicians continue to cluster in a small number of places or will independent music production become increasingly placeless? How sustainable is the current neoliberal imperative to be self-sufficient and entrepreneurial?⁵¹ At what point will the corrosion of creativity and extensification of work into the domestic sphere compel musicians to abandon the music industry?

⁵¹ Although the passage of time and further research will be required to adequately address the sustainability of the current 'do it yourself' (D.I.Y) model of music production, the results of subsequent research reveal the emergence of new and hybrid variations. Indeed, there is evidence of some disenfranchised musicians rejecting the imperatives of self-sufficiency and de-specialization. Instead these individuals are attempting to enhance the quality and value of their creative outputs by re-specializing and outsourcing non-music tasks to managers, family members and collaborators. The incidence of 'getting help' to overcome the challenges of independent music production is the subject of ongoing and future research.

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