

It's Hip to Be Scene: Authenticity, Esoteric Knowledge and Subcultural Style in Saint John and Portland.

by

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Abstract

I examine how punks, hipsters and the hipperati evaluate their scene and city through the language and rituals of authenticity and esoteric knowledge. This esoteric knowledge can be used to develop subcultures and the surrounding urban environment. It can also undermine it. I examined this using ethnographic research via participant observation. I spent eight evenings in music venues belonging to these subcultures in order to extrapolate the sorts of discourse surrounding authenticity that is exchanged during the trading of esoteric knowledge. I selected Saint John, New Brunswick and Portland, Maine as two east coast cities with similar music scenes and subcultures. What I discovered was that the demonstrations of esoteric knowledge in the two cities that I observed were similar to occurrences in other scenes in different cities. The conversational exchanges of authenticity within subcultures includes one-upmanship, reverse snobbery and carefully selected exposures of insider knowledge.

Dedication

I want to thank the following individuals for all of their encouragement, assistance and inspiration. I will never forget the advice and guidance that they have all provided:

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Chapter One: Introduction to cities, scenes, subcultures, and terminology

There is something fascinating about traveling to an architecturally beautiful city and finding a thriving music scene. Historical and unique architecture are crucial for the look of cities and buildings are important for the sorts of businesses they attract, especially with regard to music. These are the components that make visiting a new city exciting to me. The shops, restaurants and venues that are so necessary to music scenes are often in older, downtown buildings and the cities are themselves open to the culture of music. The idea that music scenes and their subcultures interacted with the city sparked an interest in me when I studied John Leland (2004), who illustrated how the city and the hip scene meet:

...hip does not happen just anywhere. It requires population density, so that people rub against each other, and so that the misfits, dissidents and outcasts can find each other. In close quarters they trade bits of style, skill and language, mangling each other's gifts to produce something hybrid and new (p. 345).

The city and music scenes promote hybrid mixing and the formations and economics of new subcultural identities, which in turn alter the feel and look of a city. Scenes are geographically unique. Punk and hipster music scenes depend on cities so that scene members can hang out in music venues, restaurants and cafés. Cities provide enough of a population to form a subculture and a scene lifestyle. Places to meet, work, and buy merchandise are vital to a scene, but more crucially they are places where subcultural style and identity are evaluated and approved. These places are generally not chain stores or fast-food restaurants, but rather, local businesses that provide a sense of community as well as public spaces for scene members to evaluate and perform their identities. Not all

cities have a wide range of local businesses that consist of specialty shops, stores, and cafés, but cities that support small businesses tend to have a local arts scene. Artists who support local businesses can be seen as part of a growing market segment tied to “artisanal capitalism,” which will be discussed later.

In this thesis, I examine how punks, hipsters and the hipperati evaluate their scene and city through the language and rituals of authenticity and esoteric knowledge. This esoteric knowledge can be used to develop subcultures and the surrounding urban environment, but may also undermine them. Authenticity is a symbolic form of power and is something that subcultural members use to remain exclusive. The language of authenticity is often ironic, and in practice can be a form of reverse snobbery. Subcultural practices are often peculiar and contradictory. While punks pride themselves on individuality, punk subcultures also have particular style codes that are adhered to with devotion, thus making its members similar to one another. Individual difference is not the goal when there are predetermined items and articles that define subcultural authenticity. The goal seems to be group solidarity and collective identity. I wanted to conduct participant observation because the method permitted me to be at the most important scene hangout for observations. I knew that there would be many occasions for informal interviews at music venues. I also knew that there would be opportunities to observe conversations that were essential to what I wanted to study. Participant observation was the most productive method for studying the music scenes because it allowed me access to members’ social performances and speech. I examined how authenticity played a large role in how a scene functioned. The notion of authenticity was prevalent in all the punk and indie rock scenes I examined. Authenticity predominantly focuses on personal style

and esoteric, or insider, knowledge in subcultural scenes and is itself a form of subcultural capital; concepts that I further explore in Chapter Three, the literature review.

I selected Saint John, New Brunswick and Portland, Maine and chose shows to attend at music venues in both cities. In Saint John, I selected Peppers Pub, the predominant venue in the city that featured both punk and indie rock. There were several venues in Portland, Maine that featured punk or indie music. I selected Geno's Rock Club and The Empire because they were integral spaces for punk and indie rock music. Saint John and Portland are the sorts of cities where interesting music scenes can survive. They are both cities that embrace local businesses and have communities of interest in music. These cities have the sort of criteria that are essential to be a viable music city: subcultural interest, strong arts communities, large working-class population, and former industrial centers trying to reinvent themselves as creative cities (Florida, 2012, para. 10). Florida argues that the skills that people bring to cities will attract more businesses to cities than tax breaks and government handouts (2012, p. xi). This is not an uncontested position, however. Economist Edward Glaeser (2004) critiques Florida's concept of the creative city by reasoning that it is skilled people rather than the creatives that contribute most to the urban economy (p. 4). My central argument, however, is that the notion of authenticity is an important component to how a scene functions. Scene functionality includes the esoteric knowledge and a claim to some form of group-authenticity that is different from the mainstream definitions of self and group identity. Scene functionality is heavily reliant on the city in which it belongs.

This work draws mainly from the ideas and analyses of Sharon Zukin (2010) and Jane Jacobs (1961), especially those focused on how people are drawn to particular

neighbourhoods and how they interact in those neighbourhoods as part of a community of interest. Zukin and Jacobs both evaluate how mixed housing and small shops and businesses can be good for the community and the economy. I reviewed the studies of Zukin and Jacobs for the third chapter of this thesis. I use the work of Dick Hebdige (1979), William Ryan Force (2009) and John Leland (2004) throughout this research to analyze how scenes operate. Hebdige studied style and its symbolic power. Force belonged to a punk subculture and studied his own scene and discussed esoteric knowledge. Leland evaluates the role of subcultures in cities, the emerging hip scene and hipster lifestyle as well as the historical forces that shape hipness. Zukin focuses more centrally on the difference between economic power and cultural power (2010). Economic power is the ability to influence the structure of neighbourhoods based on income. Cultural power cannot be purchased by having wealth; cultural power influences neighbourhoods with subcultural and artistic scenes. Those with economic power could also have cultural power, though money is not the most assured way to cultural power.

Scene Functionality:

Sharon Zukin (2010) and Jane Jacobs (1961), in particular have researched how cities function culturally. While scenes, subcultures, and youth cultures have been reviewed and studied in detail by Hebdige, (1979) and Force, (2009) they tend to pay little attention to the social and economic fabric of the city. The scene tends to be associated with the city in which it belongs, but rarely are cities and scenes studied as two co-dependent components. I discovered throughout my observations that scene members took for granted that there were interesting occurrences in their own city. They often compared their own scene to ones in larger cities like Seattle or New York and did not

see that theirs was also significant in terms of vibrancy and uniqueness. While population density is important for the success of a scene, dedication seems to be more crucial for its survival. Small scenes survive with dedicated members, and at times, large scenes can disintegrate without such members. The success of a scene can be attributed to the committed group of people that are part of the scene. Commitment, along with the meeting places, such as, record shops, cafés, and music venues, contribute to the functionality of the scene (Force, 2009, p. 291). The sorts of venues, shops, stores and restaurants available to scene members help the sustainability of the scene. This is a reciprocal relationship where the scene needs the local shops for the viability of hangouts and the local shops depend on the scene for the endurance of their business.

Punk and indie rock shows generally emerge in central areas (Leland, 2004, p.346), which is why the study focuses on Saint John's uptown and downtown Portland. Saint John's central area is called Uptown Saint John or simply referred to as Uptown (See maps of these areas in Appendix A and B). I have never attended a music show in a brand new or gentrified building. Newer buildings, especially boxed stores, tend to be outside of downtown districts where standardization is more likely to occur. New buildings are higher in rent and the owners tend to be particular about the sorts of businesses that they will rent to. Older buildings are more affordable and provide opportunities for small businesses to mix in with other entrepreneurs. In a functional downtown (Jacobs, 1961, p. 198), a scene member can go to the record store, pick up some groceries, buy clothing and get a coffee all within one neighbourhood.

Having attended music shows for over a decade, I have always thought there were similarities between Saint John's and Portland's scenes. I was interested in conducting a

comparative analysis between the two cities and I was able to examine those similarities in the study. The scene observations at the three venues resembled each other. The Empire and Peppers Pub have much in common. The type of urban space and architecture differed for Geno's Rock Club in terms of aesthetic, décor and urban locale. The downtown cores of both cities also share similarities, though Portland is quite a bit larger. Since my participant observation, redevelopments in Saint John's downtown core have spruced-up the uptown areas. The majority of redevelopment in Saint John's core is tied to one primary developer, Historica. They have contributed to the redevelopment of twelve major buildings in the commercial district of Uptown Saint John. Portland's downtown was not redeveloped quickly by one major developer, so there is more variety to the look and feel that has occurred in Uptown Saint John.

The Terms

In studying punk and indie subcultures it is important to discuss how identifying labels are used. Subcultures are the groups of people that form a scene, such as punk or hipsters, and these scenes create a sense of community. The scene is described as and includes the subculture, the public spaces, the merchandise and the lifestyle of the subculture (see Glossary). In Seattle's grunge scene in the early 1990s, the grunge hangouts and the music were parts of the scene and the alternative fans who were "grunge," dressed scene, and listened to the music that belonged to the subculture.

The terms punk and hipster encompass various definitions. For the purposes of this thesis, the terms are limited to their subcultural and music scene associations. The term "punk" will not include neo-pop punks, or "mall punks." Both classifications refer

to individuals who describe themselves as punks, perhaps online, but do not attend music shows.

The punks described in this thesis are subculturally committed and include the scene members who are often regarded as poseurs and thought to lack authenticity. They are included because they are used to benchmark authenticity. The scene members who lack the esoteric knowledge will not necessarily be considered an authentic insider, but a yardstick to measure the authenticity of others in the scene. Esoteric knowledge (Force, 2009, p. 303) is constantly being discussed in these scenes and is important to maintain. During my observations, if someone seemed to be trying too hard they were perceived as being “too scene.” Other members gain authenticity in comparison because they claim to possess a more “natural” and “essential” esoteric knowledge.

The term hipster has various connotations and definitions due to recent widespread popularity in the last ten years. Huffington Post journalist, Julia Plevin, used the term in a 2008 article that reviewed hipster culture and how hipsters dislike being labeled (Plevin, 2008, para. 4). Generally, the term “hipster” is used to describe indie rock scene members who prefer a particular style of dress and an ironic attitude; the hipster is further linked with artistic or artisanal tendencies (K-Hole, 2003, p. 6).

Authenticity in this study refers to the evaluations that subcultures often use to rank scene commitment (Force, 2009, p. 291). The “straight world” are the people that live a structured nine-to-five life based on income and commodities on familiar concept in contemporary popular culture. Borrowed from gay culture, the term “straight world” has been used by subcultures for a few decades. The term is also used by Dick Hebdige (1979, p. 53-54) and by music artists, such as Hole. In the grunge band’s song “Credit in

the straight world,” the lyrics contend that the straight world is unethical and is where people experience unpleasant occurrences: “I got some credit in the straight world, I lost a leg, I lost an eye. Go for credit in the real world, you will die.” I observed that “straight world” was used more often than “mainstream world,” “dom world” (short for dominant world), “society” or the “real world.”

Punks and hipsters regard one another as authentic because both scenes are considered superior to the straight world. Punks recognize hipsters as an authentic subculture, yet they also believe punks are a better subculture than hipsters. The reverse is also true. In Saint John and in Portland, punks and hipsters use “scene points” to evaluate others. Scene points is not an actual scoring system that ranks scene members by number. The term refers to gaining authenticity. It is how scene members give each other nods of approval within the scene. Throughout my observations I noted that scene members called achievements of authenticity “scene points.”

I have used the term “the hipperati,” which was originally formulated by Sharon Zukin (2010). The label describes a group of people that are not scene members. The hipperati are people that work outside of the straight world and its typical nine-to-five jobs that feature paid benefits, vacation time and seniority. They live like artists or are artists. The hipperati work at artistic or creative jobs. They work as freelancers, contract workers or shift workers so that they have a flexible schedule. The jobs range from, but are not limited to, graphic designers, web designers, interior designers, artists, writers, actors, chefs, baristas, filmmakers, and musicians. As I noted in my observations, the hipperati, often hold more than one of the posts listed above. Several artists were baristas, and chefs were musicians. The combinations are endless, but what is key is that the

hipperati often live in a precarious work environment. They generally live outside of the straight world values and they honor creativity more than financial wellbeing.

The hipperati live a bohemian lifestyle, which likens them to scene members. Unlike scene members and subcultures, the hipperati do not identify with one genre. Like scene members and subcultures, the hipperati challenge straight world values. Leland wrote about the hipperati in New York City before Zukin conceived her term – both describing a particular group of people that are essential to the artistic culture of a city. Scene members can be hipperati, especially if they work at a hip job. They are scene members first and foremost because they place more importance on the subculture. I have a personal understanding of the hipperati because I fit into this subculture and have several of the components that Leland and Zukin describe: someone who is part of the art scene, works flex jobs (one of them being at an art gallery), is a graduate student and enjoys both punk and hipster music venues. I value flex time and creativity more than financial goals. During my participant observation I noticed that, like me, the hipperati also enjoyed talking about the overall scene: the music, the buildings, the city and the events that coordinated these components.

I use the term “grittification” to describe instances when the grit of a neighbourhood is considered authentic, resulting in its preservation rather than its destruction. Though I wonder if this preservation is another kind of destruction – the displacement of a working-class culture and urban space. Grittification is a term that I coined while writing and studying for this thesis. Destruction is often associated with gentrification. The term “grittification” is not a stage of gentrification, though it can inadvertently lead to it when the appraisals by subcultures render a gritty establishment

trendy. Grittification is the process of valuing grit. More than this, grittification is also a term to use in instances when subcultures value grit as authentic just because they consider something gritty. Specifically in instances when the significance of grit means more than their appreciation of the place. This occurs when grit is considered authentic and is preferred to new structures and places. In my participant observation in Portland, scene members and hipperati often name-dropped the artistic neighbourhood of East Bayside as where they lived. East Bayside is artistic, affordable and old. Grittification is a way of making reference to the historically working-class neighbourhoods. The term was created to effectively convey this concept with one word.

This chapter has served as an introduction to some of the terminology I will be using. Subcultures develop their essential esoteric knowledge and the surrounding urban environment in pursuit of scene authenticity. And while the language of authenticity can often be ironic, it is essential to their interactions and to how they form their identities within the urban landscape. My next chapter examines the methods used to gather and interpret my data.

Chapter Two: The Research Methods

In this chapter I examine the research methods used for this thesis and how they shaped the findings. I disclose how I planned for my ethnographic research and the ways in which I made reasonable decisions about how to conduct participant observation. This chapter also explains how data is recorded and interpreted and it also provides some observations from the venues.

I selected the participant observation method to use for this study. I chose to conduct ethnographic research of punk and indie rock scenes after I drew research ideas

from Sharon Zukin, Jane Jacobs, Dick Hebdige, John Leland and William Ryan Force. Ethnographic research allowed me to conduct participant observation, record conversations and interpret the data from the three venues: Peppers Pub, The Empire and Geno's Rock Club.

The first part was to determine how involved I was going to get with the scenes in both cities. There was the option of being a non-member as per DeWalt and DeWalt (2010). This was not an option due to my previous membership in punk scenes. The peripheral member made the most sense for this type of research as I participated as a member, though did not become too immersed. Complete participation would have required full scene commitment and can increase observational bias according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p.88). I mapped out what I was going to look for at the venues (2010, p.78) and conducted informal interviews (2010, p.81) with questions and comments. I took notes at each show, but I also made certain that I was also experiencing the scene occurrences (2010, p.86). It was important to establish a rapport with the people at the venues in order to be accepted and to have meaningful conversations that were only slightly guided (2010, p.50). I would only guide conversations if they would go off topic from scene/subculture related conversations. To guide the conversation, I would ask a question like "where is the aftershow tonight?" or "does this band play here often?" Though I did not have prepared questions so the conversations were not guided heavily or often.

Ethnography is an excellent way to explore lifestyles and scenes. Cities and subcultures are social and the rational approach to studying them is to generate data in social settings. In this study, I was a peripheral scene member observing and interacting

with participants. I conducted eight evenings of study; four in Saint John and four in Portland. I selected the three venues by asking people where they went to see shows and where they gathered to hangout. In Saint John, the gathering places were the two record shops: Backstreet Records and Second Spin. In Portland, I inquired about scene venues at Bull Moose Music, Electric Buddhas and Coffee by Design, specifically the India Street Location. I observed two shows at Geno's Rock Club in Portland: one show in May of 2012 and the other in November of 2012. Each show was roughly six hours long and I stayed for the duration. I observed two shows at The Empire in Portland; one in November of 2011 and the other in May of 2012. Each was roughly five hours to six hours in length. I attended four shows at Peppers Pub in Saint John. Two were in June 2012, and the other two in November of 2012. Each show was approximately three hours or less. It was easier to have more conversations in Portland with scene members considering the shows lasted longer than the shows at Saint John's Peppers Pub. The Portland venues had designated music spaces, which meant that the shows could begin at any time. The Empire had a kitchen downstairs from the performance space. Peppers Pub, also a Thai restaurant, Lemongrass Thai Fare, would become a music venue at 10PM. Since the shows began later at Peppers Pub, there was enough time to feature no more than two bands; both venues in Portland often featured three bands with long sets. Peppers Pub usually only featured two bands and the sets were short. The shows began earlier in Portland and there were lots of people out in the streets, going into restaurants and shops.

For the evenings of participant observation, I brought a confederate who assisted me with writing notes at all shows. He was not familiar with subcultures or scene lifestyle

except for what I had explained to him. He assisted by recording quotes while I talked to participants. It freed me from writing and enabled me to focus on the conversation. His assistance generated more data. My confederate took notes on his phone and, less frequently, used a small notepad. Most notes were in text message format or in a small notepad and were transcribed into a larger notebook that I used to write more detailed notes after the shows. The use of a confederate provided me with security; while it is not necessarily dangerous to attend shows alone, it is certainly better to go with others. It is also less awkward to approach scene members with someone else.

Much of my information about the downtown neighbourhoods in Saint John and Portland, was gathered by walking around the urban areas and taking notes in 2011 and in 2012. I focused on the types of stores and shops that were in each downtown, as well as the sorts of housing units found in the downtowns of both cities. The housing was of interest to me because of the mixed uses of neighborhoods that is discussed by Jacobs (1961). Comparing the urban geography of Saint John and Portland contributed to my understanding of how the music venues related to their neighbourhood.

Participant Observation as a Peripheral Scene Member

Several factors made participant observation the most effective method for this study. As a research method, participant observation provides opportunities to observe and partake in scene conversations. Considering that shows are essential to music scenes, it is important to conduct observations at these music venues and to become familiar with the music and bands that perform there (Force, 2009, p. 294-295). Participant observation provides opportunities to observe scene members and to experience being involved in the music scene. DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p. 2) describe participant observation as the

“starting point of ethnographic research.” This was the primary method used to focus on the esoteric knowledge of scene members and their definitions of authenticity. Participant observation was also used to focus on neighbourhoods and hangouts in the downtowns of Portland and Saint John and it provided me with a rich source of data for this thesis.

Venues collect scene members together in one public space during a span of a couple of hours. They are a rich source for data collection. To record the data at the music venues I chose to write notes in a notebook and text messages to myself. It was quicker and less awkward to jot down notes in my small and portable notebook. Jot notes are the words, quotes, phrases and lingo that are recorded throughout the observation. DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p. 158) discuss three types of notes: records of events, records of prolonged activities and journaling. I took these three types of notes, but I was also interested in taking pictures, though taking pictures at The Empire and Peppers Pub was easier than at Geno’s. At each venue, I recorded events. I wrote a journal and wrote detailed notes when the shows were over and I was alone. While journaling I remembered to write in the details that I may not have elaborated on or explained in my records.

Journaling combined my reflections as well as my observations. The recordings started at the music venues and were ongoing throughout my observations. Journaling took about an hour to write for every two hours of observation. Personal reflections written in my journal provided insight or explanations into what I observed and any thoughts or concerns that I had. DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p. 170) suggest using two pages that face each in the notebook. The right page for observed events, the weather, and location details and the left side of the page would be for hypotheses, potential questions

and items to be completed. I used a similar format, but in fear of running out of space, I used two separate books: one for recording at the venues and another for journaling. I used a large book for the journaling that I completed after each show and a small notebook for the recording at each show. I also used my text messages that I incorporated into my journaling. Since I used two books it was easier to glance at my recordings while I journaled. It also made it easier for me to refer to the books because the large brown book was for journaling and the small pink one was for the recordings. If the notes were in the same book, it would have required flipping through more dates, times and pages to find the information. The main reason that I kept two separate books for notes was because I wanted to keep my observations separate from my thoughts about them. There were items that ended up in my journal but were not in my recordings – DeWalt and DeWalt (2010 p. 171) call these headnotes.

Headnotes are concepts and understandings easily remembered since the researcher may already be familiar with the content. For example, I observed several punks wearing Doc Martens and journaled about them. I did not have to record specific details about the boots because of my familiarity with scene style: it was something that I knew I would recall when writing about them. While journaling, I included my own thoughts about the observations into the data. I considered items that I may have overlooked while at the shows. An example of this was some of the conversations I had with Jason at Peppers Pub. We discussed the Dead Kennedys and, aside from verbatim quotes that were in text messages, I mostly added my observations in while I was journaling. I took the esoteric knowledge of that conversation for granted while it was happening and immediately afterwards. My confederate texted the verbatim quotes as he

had not taken that conversation for granted.

I began the observation process with sets of criteria to observe in order to remain focused. I studied the structure of the performance space and the people that were there. With prior planning, I was still aware that there would be lots of data available for recording that was too difficult to anticipate. The most important skill the participant observer needs to develop is the ability to attend to details. Effective observation means “seeing” as much as possible in any situation. This can include noting the arrangement of physical space, the arrangement of people within that space, the specific activities and movement of people in a scene, the interaction among people in the scene and with the researcher, the specific words spoken, and nonverbal interactions, including facial expression (DeWalt, 2010 p. 81). Observational research can be overwhelming because there are several occurrences at every moment (DeWalt, 2010 p. 86). Thus, it is important to remain focused on the current experience rather than attempting to observe everything that is occurring. Instead of trying to capture every moment with every individual or group in the room, I made sure to remain focused on the people that I was talking with. By remaining focused on my own participation, I listened intently to the people that I talked with and observed the occurrences that I was part of instead of rushing to be part of every possible vantage point of the venue. I tried not to be distracted by other conversations that people were having around me.

It was ideal for me to be a peripheral member of the scene (DeWalt, 2010 p. 24). “Peripheral-member researchers become part of the scene, or one of the group within it, but keep themselves from being drawn completely into it. They interact frequently and intensively enough to be recognized by members as insiders and to acquire first-hand

information and insight” (DeWalt, 2010 p. 24). This was the most viable option for me. It was affordable for me to plan to attend shows and to scatter the visits. I gathered sufficient data for the scope of this thesis from the eight shows that I attended in Saint John and Portland.

While making contacts, meeting people and talking to them at the venues, I always disclosed that I was studying and observing for a thesis I was writing. Conversing with scene members was simple, mostly because they enjoyed talking about their interests and lifestyles. From their perspective I was a visiting scene member from elsewhere who was conducting research on their music scene. My own genuine interest in punk and indie music made it easy for me to gain credibility from the scene members at the shows. A researcher with no exposure to punk and indie rock may have struggled with the identifying nature of esoteric knowledge discourse. It is much easier to talk to punks and hipsters if you have access to particular details about the different scenes and understand their significance.

As DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) observe, informants often take for granted some of the information shared during informal conversations. Throughout my observations, the informants forgot that I was conducting research. This is common with the participant observation method because over time informants accepted me into their music scene. It was as though I was part of the group, as well as a researcher. I was not considered an outsider who was interested in researching their music milieu. Interestingly, conducting research about scenes seemed to gain authenticity points with several scene members.

Mike Davis, a hipster and a subcultural connoisseur from The Empire in Portland, was enthusiastic about studies that analyzed scenes, and in particular, his scene, which he

considered most authentic. Matt Heckler from the band Deep Chatham who played at The Empire asked several questions about the study after I disclosed that I was conducting participant observation; he indicated approvingly that it was a “very interesting” study. Other show attendees that I discussed the study with were excited that I was interested in their scene. One girl believed that I was a voice, a representative, of the cultural experience of their scene at The Empire. In general, people at The Empire tended to be curious about the study, as they asked several questions and continued conversations about it. At Peppers Pub and at Geno’s I received nods of approval, or comments such as “wow, that’s cool” but no one pursued lengthy conversations about this study. Mike Davis wanted to be a host, to make us feel comfortable at The Empire. He quickly introduced us to local favorite beverages by suggesting scene-approved drinks. Before my confederate and I ordered our drinks, Mike turned to my confederate and recommended a beer based on how he perceived us: “you will like the craft beer here, it’s local and cool, and students and skate punks love the stuff. I drink Pabst.” He was referring to the beer that many hipsters claim as their brand of choice. Mike described The Empire and mapped the sorts of bands that generally played there and the types of people that attended the shows.

Generally, most people simply forgot that I was conducting research after I disclosed that I was a researcher. People in the mosh pit talked to me with ease, even if they did not know about the study. Since most outsiders would not attempt the mosh pit, I gained their trust more quickly by being in it. Participation was key for my study. Gaining my own scene points ensured that I would be able to talk to members as one of them and engage in meaningful conversations.

Conclusion

Participant observation serves its function by gaining insight into the way in which punk and hipster subcultures interact and the way that they express their scene commitment via style. Ethnographic research was the best approach in order to gain access to the demonstrations of esoteric knowledge as William Ryan Force had, as I will be discussing further in the next chapter. The method that I selected provided opportunities for me to observe the subcultures in their scenes in real time where I was able to be a peripheral scene member. The data that I obtained worked in conjunction with the literature that I will be explaining in the next chapter. The literature focuses on the city and subcultures and how they interact with each other.

Chapter Three: The Literature

This chapter examines the notion of authenticity in subcultures and the way that they interact with their urban landscape. It explains the role that the city plays in scenes while also exploring the trading of esoteric knowledge in which subcultures participate. The literature in this chapter provides the essential framework for the methods and findings of this study, as it focuses on the functions of scenes in the city and how subcultures and the urban landscape can benefit from one another, and how they can be a detriment.

People want to achieve authenticity for various reasons, but mostly to instill a sense of purpose in their lives (Jacobsen, 2007, p. 293). The existentialist philosopher J.P. Sartre professed that to be authentic is to be in tune with the call of conscience. One must struggle to achieve a freely chosen and original moral life. Authenticity has to be earned, he claimed:

I shall be my own authenticity only if under the influence of the call of conscience I launch out toward death with a resolute-decision as toward my own most peculiar possibility. At this moment I reveal myself to myself in authenticity, and I raise others along with myself toward the authentic (Sartre, 1943, p. 246).

Sartre's call to be authentic, to follow the call of conscience, and trust in one's own moral potential continues to be the basis of much of today's discourse on authenticity. In this chapter I focus on the idea of authenticity as well as the role that cities play in creating "authentic" music scenes.

The Notion of Authenticity

Sartre's definition offers a starting point for our investigation of authenticity. The concept has been much debated, however, especially when the binary of authentic and inauthentic is used as criteria for cultural and social exclusion. The urban sociologist Sharon Zukin provides a clear explanation about how authenticity functions within an urban context to attract new members and exclude old ones. In an urban setting, authenticity often refers to origins and originality: "...a city is authentic if it can create the *experience* of origins. This is done by preserving historic buildings and districts, encouraging the development of small-scale boutiques and cafés, and branding neighbourhoods in terms of distinctive cultural identities" (Zukin, 2010, p. 3). New cafés and boutiques in old buildings are considered authentic and unique to subcultural members. They evoke 'origins,' history and grittiness, and at the same time are places where new cultural distinctions are made and negotiated.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu reminds us that distinctions are inherent in any setting organized along hierarchical lines. Distinctions mark the boundaries among

different cultural tastes and judgements, while creating these boundaries that involve a furious struggle over meaning: different social groups define themselves in relation to each other and they make distinctions between what they perceive to be culturally noble or unworthy.

The definition of cultural nobility is the stake in a struggle which has gone on unceasingly...between groups differing in their ideas of culture and the legitimate relation to culture and to works of art, and therefore differing in the conditions of acquisition of which these dispositions are the product (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2).

Zukin uses Bourdieu's concept of distinction to illustrate how "authenticity" can become a tool of ostracism. Scene members have the power to define what is finest and most interesting. Finest does not refer to the most luxurious or expensive commodities, but rather what is original, what is raw, and what is considered to be the truest. Scene members use this sort of appraisal system to claim superiority over other groups; their musical taste is best, their style of dress is most original, their tastes for food and beverages are the most refined. For hipsters, authentic commodities could be at a gritty diner with three-dollar coffee and pie specials, or could come from a specialty café where the coffee is twelve dollars per cup. Punks would be more apt to consider a cheap hole-in-the-wall as authentic and would be mostly averse to the designer shops. While some of the hipster preferences are pricey and flaunt privilege, it is not the price that determines legitimacy. The authentic commodities are about scene tastes more than economic power – those with the best tastes can claim superiority over those who have purchasing power.

Those with purchasing power can purchase the most decadent products, but the hipster could change the discourse and label the diner coffee as the most authentic; or

they could label the designer café as the most legitimate. Food trucks can have authentic tacos, while pricey Mexican restaurants can be considered to lack legitimacy. These evaluations have “sticking power” because authenticity is set by those in the scene. “Whether it’s real or not, then, authenticity becomes a tool of power. Any group that insists on the authenticity of its own tastes in contrast to others’ can claim moral superiority” (Zukin, 2010, p. 3).

At the same time, subcultural authenticity is in a constant battle against the economic power of the straight world. The tastes of subcultures may not always appeal to those of the straight world, and the straight world may not always regard subcultural tastes as authentic. For example, hipster food blogs are often regarded as authentic by the straight world. Yet, safety pins as accessories worn by the punks are not regarded as authentic by the straight world. Subcultures retain their moral superiority over the straight world by claiming that they do not need economic power to enjoy an authentic life. The legitimacy of subcultural tastes are based on subjective preferences, knowledge, and judgements rather than making selections based on economic power.

Cultural power and economic power often struggle against each other, and this is particularly evident in the fight over the gentrification and the preservation of a neighbourhood. Zukin describes the delicate balance of preserving the origins of a neighbourhood and developing economic growth and opportunity. The points of contention come sharply into focus when some people desire the neighbourhood’s origins and others seek a reinvention for it. Origins are usually, as Zukin argues, “a traditional, mythical desire for roots” (2010, p. 2), whereas gentrification focuses on economic extraction and change.

Zukin studied how several neighbourhoods in New York City's East Village experienced drastic gentrification. She highlights the Bowery as the street with the most change and uses it as an example of how a neighbourhood lost its soul, its origins. The Bowery was long synonymous with poverty, working-classness and punk rock. Yet, its historical grit is gone. A men's high-end fashion store, John Varvatos, now occupies the address that the iconic punk rock club CBGB once did. The high-end fashion store pays homage to CBGB by having a rock-edge aesthetic of décor throughout the store; photographs and posters from the punk rock club adorn the walls. The store sells vinyl records and photos of rock stars by the company "Rock Paper Photo." The John Varvatos store is for Zukin a hipster-down-and-dirty form of gentrification (2010, p. 37).

The John Varvatos store tries to appeal to the nostalgic punk rockers by selling vinyl records, by providing a stage for performances, and by featuring a décor that pays homage to CBGB. It is hard to speculate if the efforts are appreciated or not by the punks, as this is generally the sort of grit that hipsters enjoy. Hipsters tend to prefer a sanitized version of grit, which is what the Varvatos store provides with its homage to CBGB without the grittiness of the punk club. From my observations, most punks would consider the efforts and the takeover as lacking authenticity. Others would believe that since the store is paying homage to CBGB, that they cannot be fully corporate. Either way, the John Varvatos store is glorifying punk in a safe environment. A men's high-end clothing store cannot generate or replicate the same crowd as CBGB's. Zukin commented on the new burger restaurant, DBGB, a few shops down from the old CBGB location: "a high-class French chef has opened a bistro that jokingly copies the old CBGB logo: DBGB, Daniel Boulud Good Burger" (Zukin, 2010, p. 102).

The same people who frequented the CBGB punk rock club would not necessarily be the same types who would buy clothes from John Varvatos or eat at DBGB. The upscale businesses are not mixed in with affordable businesses. The new stores on the Bowery are far from the punk rock origins with which it is generally associated. These new urban spaces have, over time, displaced the old neighbourhood fabric of grit and its underground scene. The street named after Joey Ramone, called Joey Ramone Place, is on the corner of The Bowery and 2nd Street. Its street sign is one of the most stolen street signs in all of New York City (Swanson, 2013, para. 4). In my experience, punks would likely argue that having a street named after Joey Ramone cannot replace the grit that used to exist on The Bowery and is just a symbol of a sanitized version of punk.

New York City's East Village is another example of a gentrified neighbourhood after it was associated with Bohemian and artistic living. Zukin has mapped its current upscale transformation:

The East Village has always been an area where protest is a way of life and history is important. These are the sources of the neighbourhood's reputation for authenticity, and they have been preserved in the low rents and social spaces of a sometimes shabby, often funky locale of tenements and small stores. Now, though, after decades of anchoring the loose lifestyle of the 1960s, the East Village's quirky shops and poets' cafés are being overwhelmed by trendy restaurants, chain stores, and expensive, renovated apartments. New residents and visitors are literally consuming the local (Zukin, 2010, p. 97).

The changes from the artistic streets to the gentrified neighbourhoods have resulted in raised rents from the neighbourhood that once existed. Scene members describe this as

the loss of the original neighbourhood, yet scene members are also indirectly responsible for gentrification if their presence acts as a magnet for gentrifiers, a contradiction which will be discussed in the next section.

The Importance of The City for Music Scenes

Music scenes and their respective subcultures rely on cities to provide an urban space for their development. Neither scenes nor subcultures can spontaneously form on their own. A mixture of several kinds of local shops, restaurants, and housing promote neighbourhoods that are useful and entertaining to a variety of people. People can mingle, live and shop in their neighbourhood. Jane Jacobs was especially interested in the benefits of commercial diversity and wrote that:

Commercial diversity is, in itself, immensely important for cities, socially as well as economically. Most of these uses of diversity...depend directly or indirectly upon the presence of plentiful, convenient, diverse city commerce. But more than this, wherever we find a city district with an exuberant variety of cultural opportunities, variety of scenes, and a great variety in its population and other users. This is more than a coincidence. The same physical and economic conditions that generate diverse commerce are intimately related to the production, or the presence, of other kinds of city variety (Jacobs, 1961, p. 148).

Jacobs noted the importance of communities of interest within the city as being one of the greatest assets, possibly the greatest (Jacobs, 1961:119). Communities of interest reinforce strength in the neighbourhood and promote the effective use of the streets by providing traffic. Thriving and culturally interesting neighbourhoods tend to have communities of interest and economic stability.

The places where scene members choose to eat, where they go shopping, and for entertainment are as much part of their lifestyle as their musical tastes and style of dress. In Saint John, these businesses are record shops like Backstreet Records and Second Spin Records. Not only are these places to purchase recorded music, they are spaces where people gather. Other businesses in Saint John that are scene hangouts are: Java Moose, Second Cup, East Coast Donair and Pristine Life Skateboard Shop (see map in appendix A).

As in Saint John, Portland's record shops such as Electric Buddhas and Strange Maine are places to purchase music and to congregate. People hang out at Micucci's, Otto Pizza, Coffee by Design, and Space Gallery (see map in appendix B). These spaces provide a place for scene members to convene outside of the music venues. Coffee shops may be scene hangouts, but they do not only serve scene members. Those outside of the scene may be customers, or they may feel as though the place is not for them (Zukin, 2010, p. 19). It depends on the sort of business it is – specialty shops only appeal to some. For the most part, punk clothing stores only appeal to punks. Coffee shops and record stores tend to appeal to those outside of the scene as well, though some locations may seem to be intended for scene members only.

Certain businesses are part of the subcultural neighbourhood and provide components that build the scene. This is especially true if the business is a place where scene members meet. For example, I have been to Roberta's in Bushwick, in New York City, which is both a pizza place and a scene hangout for punks mostly. Chris Parachini, the owner of Roberta's, first moved to Bushwick to become an artist and a musician. The rent was affordable and other artists and musicians lived there. Using old warehouse

space, Chris and his business partners and co-chefs converted it into Roberta's (Meehan, 2008). The clientele now ranges from artists, musicians, and other members of the local community. While a pizza place does not directly influence the local music scene, it influences the fabric of the neighbourhood where the scene thrives.

Zukin illustrates how businesses can be social spaces of entrepreneurship and reinvention, but they are also contradictory in the sense that they can make old neighbourhood residents feel uncomfortable or unwanted:

By opening places of sociability where new residents feel comfortable – and longtime residents do not – they help create a neighbourhood's new beginnings. Polish residents of Williamsburg don't go to bars that feature indie rock bands or indoor miniature golf. But hipsters and gentrifiers don't wire money to Warsaw or Pueblo or stand around all night at an all-male, working-class bar. The new consumption spaces that they patronize – music bars, cafés, boutiques, vintage clothing stores – reinvent the urban community (Zukin, 2010, p. 20).

Gentrifiers, moreover, cannot authentically replicate Italian pastry shops, African clothing stores, or Greek restaurants. These places are often the types of businesses that produce a functional neighbourhood. New stores that appeal to scene members could be of interest to long-time residents. Portland's neighbourhood of East Bayside currently retains its various communities: hipsters, punks, hipperati, working-class people and new immigrants. Micucci's, a long-time Italian grocer, is situated in Portland's East Bayside. Punks, hipsters, working-class people and new immigrant residents can be seen shopping at this popular grocery store, which also functions as a take-out restaurant in the back.

Subcultures encourage through their patronage more local businesses and less

standardization from chain stores and restaurants. The combination of local businesses and residential properties develops because lower rent areas attract scene members as well as entrepreneurs. Small, local businesses are essential to cities. Without small businesses, there are no local characteristics. Chain stores and restaurants are generally new construction, and they rarely establish businesses in downtowns because the franchise prefers new shopping districts and accessible parking. These shopping districts often resemble other shopping districts in different cities. Small shops, cafés, restaurants and neighbourhood bars often go into older buildings, and are generally established in the downtowns of cities. The businesses are not standardized models, but rather, are reflections of the local residents (Jacobs, 1961, p. 188).

In my own research, I observed that several artists, musicians and scene members lived in East Bayside, a neighbourhood close to downtown Portland, which still has a strong working-class presence. The waterfront neighbourhood is near Portland's downtown and has been a working-class community since the early 1900s. The neighbourhood continues to offer affordable rent. In East Bayside, the music scenes and the working-class share housing units, shop at some of the same stores, and eat at the same restaurants. Both recent and long-time residents have a presence in the East Bayside Neighborhood Organization, a non-profit entity that cares for the interests of the residents of the neighbourhood. These businesses are not necessarily directly part of the subculture, yet the businesses are vital for sustaining the community of interest. The people in the subculture will continue to support local businesses because, as Jacobs indicated, there is a level of personal quality. Local residents are familiar with the owners and workers, and shop there because it is owned by an entrepreneur from the neighbourhood. The local

ownerships reinforce authenticity because these businesses are not large chains or too corporate.

Scene members and subcultures have an affinity for particular neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods can be found in several cities, and they are meccas that attract new members from other cities:

Hip communities replicate the flux of the road. Hipsters often think of themselves as flowing toward cheap rents, but this is only half the story. Drawn to meccas like New York, San Francisco, Seattle or Portland, they come first despite the high rents, then find liminal neighbourhoods like Williamsburg or the Mission where the dress code and real estate values are slack. When they reach critical mass there they comprise a hip scene – which jacks the rents, pushing the next arrivals to the next benighted ‘hood. If they really just wanted cheap rents they could stay home in bumfuck (Leland, 2004, p. 346).

These ideal neighbourhoods and their communities attract new scene members because they are widely recognized as a subcultural hub. The long-time residents that already live there belong to a community made up of working class people, immigrants, small business owners and large families sharing a home. These neighbourhoods have a rich community, mixed housing, local businesses, unique immigrant stores and restaurants that appeal to subcultures. As subcultures move into these working-class neighbourhoods, there is a potential for a blending of groups. There is a balance of functionality between the old and the new residents: while some stores and shops are only frequented by one group, there are several places where they co-exist. This, however, is not always the case.

From Hip to Branded

In her research, Zukin examines Williamsburg as a neighbourhood that quickly reinvented itself as a hipster mecca, but in doing so it also gentrified the neighbourhood and displaced older residents.

The story of hipster Williamsburg connects the neighbourhood's reinvention as a cultural incubator with crucial stages in the product cycle of "authentic" cool.

Like Chicago's Wicker Park in the 1990s, Manhattan's East Village in the 1980s, and SoHo in the 1970s, Williamsburg's new authenticity began with a low-rent and somewhat dangerous neighbourhood, enabling moneyless twenty-somethings who wanted to be artists to form scenes, 'zines, and experimental art forms with little market value (Zukin, 2010, p. 45).

Zukin describes the stages that are generally found in most scenes, regardless of city size. The people in music scenes within small cities tend to have similar lifestyles and interests to their medium and large city counterparts. Hipperati tend to gravitate to the same hangouts, which is how they meet and know where to find each other. On the quest for authenticity, people seek specialty stores and restaurants and by doing so are inadvertently demonstrating a need for new places that they can enjoy. The new places can alter the fabric of the neighbourhood, changing how it functions, and upscaling it:

But a group that imposes its own tastes on urban space – on the look of a street, say, or the feeling of a neighbourhood – can make a claim to that space that displaces longtime residents. To be sure, a group that can afford to pay higher rents can also be reasonably sure their claim will win: artists displace manufacturers in live-work lofts, and are displaced in turn by lawyers and media

moguls who buy these lofts as luxury condos; a gourmet cheese store or quirky coffee bar replaces a check-cashing service or take-out food shop, and is in turn displaced by a chain store that pays many thousands of dollars each month for the location. But this power over space is not just financial. Even more important, it's *cultural* power (Zukin, 2010, p. 3).

Power over space is important, of course, because it defines how space is valued. Once a neighbourhood space is defined and is cultivated as 'gritty' and cool, market development soon follows as people are attracted to it. Hip often creates a commercial revival that professionals desire and new luxury apartments are built to accommodate the new professional class.

Throughout my research, I have found that the New York City borough of Brooklyn is often used as the quintessential example of both grit and commercialism. The borough is labeled as authentic by some groups and is considered uncool by others because it did not remain undiscovered. Zukin explains how Brooklyn shifted from a hip borough to a branded one:

The origin story of Brooklyn cool is a romantic story of indie artists and culture jams, of participation and creativity; it's an anti-corporate, anti-Manhattan rant...More than that, though, it represents a larger cultural transformation, with the creation of a nouveau grit aesthetic that telescopes Williamsburg's rebirth from a cheap, unremarkable, immigrant neighbourhood near the docks to the "third hippest neighbourhood" in urban America (Zukin, 2010, p. 50).

Williamsburg, as well as other neighbourhoods in Brooklyn, was once the epitome of hip. Artists relocated to neighbourhoods like Williamsburg to partake in the existing

community and lifestyle. The demise of gritty Williamsburg brought the arrival of a gentrified neighbourhood and the charge by several artists and musicians that Brooklyn was a sell-out. Similar to Seattle's post-grunge period, Brooklyn is challenged with a post-hip and commercial label. This is not usually the case with smaller cities like Saint John and Portland, where the scenes usually remain undiscovered or fail to take off commercially. Nevertheless, the influence of branding and the charge of being a sell-out remain prevalent in these places as well.

It is hip to be scene: The Role of Esoteric Knowledge

Subcultures display scene legitimacy via style and by showcasing their insider knowledge and using it as a symbolic form of power. Force (2009) discussed subcultural capital in his research of his own scene throughout his participant observation. He explained subcultural capital as circulating and transmitting cultural knowledge amongst scene members. "Familiarity with cultural objects, along with the embodiment of associated knowledge in practice, is treated as second nature, pressuring participants to deal adeptly in these forms in order to be accepted as legitimate members" (Force, 2009, p. 291). In my observations, the ownership of a cultural object has no symbolic power if it is not mentioned or displayed. Cultural objects hold the power of authenticity if others in the scene are aware of the ownership. Force uses the term "esoteric knowledge" to describe the kind of information used to make crucial moral and aesthetic distinctions and to manage authenticity.

For each scene and for each subculture, esoteric knowledge differs. The esoteric knowledge comes off as reverse snobbery. "...it proceeds in part from a distaste for snobs and snobbishness, but also in part from a wish to assert one's superiority to snobbery

generally, which itself can seem suspiciously like a snobbish act” (Epstein, 2002, p. 10).

This sort of discourse is not unique to scenes; they occur in various groups where one-upmanship exists. This sort of interaction is common amongst academics, wine aficionados, comic book connoisseurs and art collectors. One-upmanship is used to demonstrate esoteric knowledge and claim moral superiority over others in the group. Epstein explains the process of moral superiority as a form of snobbery (or reverse snobbery) that surrounds the demonstrations of esoteric knowledge:

“The snob can have only one standard, that of comparison. And comparison inevitably implies competition, rivalry, almost full-time invidiousness. The snob is always positioning himself. He needs to know that he is in a better position than the next person. The true snob can know no lengthy contentment. If he doesn’t feel his own superiority, he is likely to feel an aching sense of inferiority, or at least not being in the position he wants to be in” (Epstein, 2002, p. 16)

During my participant observation at The Empire in Portland, a band called Deep Chatham were touring in support of their album *Words from the Well*. Two male hipsters were discussing how the indie band had a unique sound; they described it as “Irish music from the 1920s...yet is still indie rock.” They referred to the music as absurd, which was meant as a compliment. The two scene members were appreciating the unique sound of the band. The two began deliberating about how people might mistake them as a band from Boston, due to their sound. They mentioned how it was interesting that the band was from North Carolina – except for the fiddler. Knowing that the fiddler is from New York State as opposed to North Carolina like the other band members is esoteric knowledge. This conversation was a way for the two scene members to show one-

upmanship and to ‘manage’ their authenticity. Even though this sort of information is easy enough to find, knowing about it and choosing to discuss its relevance are what makes it esoteric knowledge. By choosing to discuss it, they make the fact of where the fiddler is from relevant and suggests that those who did not know this must not be fans. This sort of conversation establishes esoteric knowledge and the symbolic currency for subcultural capital. (Force, 2009, p. 303).

Esoteric knowledge in music scenes is essential, and conversations amongst scene members include it. Force studied and observed the occurrences and effects of esoteric knowledge in his own punk scene:

Subcultural clout is garnered by conspicuous interactional displays of insider knowledge, which is esoteric insofar as it is acquired through a secret apprenticeship and displayed only for a particular audience to establish a shared stock of cultural resources in use among members of that group (Force, 2009, p. 303).

An example of this occurred in an exchange among three punk scene members at Geno’s in Portland during my observations. They discussed the punk band The Offspring, mentioning the band's first album. They concluded that The Offspring’s first album was certainly the rawest, but that their second album was the most authentic. Their second album, *Ignition*, has been in my own experience considered the most authentic. It features the song “Session” which has been on several punk compilation albums. The Offspring were not well known outside of punk subcultures at the time of its release. It would not be until their third album, *Smash*, when they gained notoriety outside of punk circles. Often it is a band’s first album that is considered to be the most legitimate. The first

album is considered their most authentic because it is rare that the band's popularity preceded the release of a first album. Popularity is generally generated after the first and into the second album; once too much notoriety is established for a band, some subcultures regard those bands as "sell-outs." The first album is rarely a sell-out because the band is just beginning to record.

When I was observing at Peppers Pub in Saint John, two scene members were each insisting that they were first to discover the Tom Fun Orchestra. They were debating if the band was a "sell-out" when they put out their first official album. From what I gathered from the conversation, The Tom Fun Orchestra seemed to have produced songs, perhaps online, prior to releasing the album. The benchmark for selling out is different for the hipsters: they prefer undiscovered bands. Even if the bands are far from mainstream, hipsters may still consider a band a "sell-out" if they record more frequently.

In Portland at The Empire, an intense argument amongst a group of hipsters focused on their preferences for different albums by the featured band, The Mallett Brothers Band. Some scene members enjoyed the first album the most and others preferred the newest. I observed that when a scene member names a band's first album as their favorite, they are generally guaranteed to gain credit in scene authenticity. Scene members with the privilege of being the first, or one of the first, to acquire and listen to a band's debut album have bragging rights. While there is no evidence indicating that the scene member did in fact like the band before anyone else was familiar with them, the urgency to claim that they did is used to demonstrate authenticity. A female scene member admitted to a male scene member at Geno's in Portland that she only started to like The Distillers after their second album, but now appreciates and likes their first

album more. She was flustered by her confession, as though she had revealed a deep secret rather than disclosing her musical preferences. She was risking her scene authenticity through this admission.

Keith Negus argues that the mystique of a band's first album, untouched by corporations, is an illusion. There are instances when a band releases an album, or several albums, using a private label. However, there are still marketing processes that are involved to sell records with private labels. The idea of the first album seduces scene members into thinking that the first is more authentic. Bands still sell and distribute their albums, regardless of their popularity; the process is the same. Regardless of popularity or genre, the mediations of the industry are present (Negus, 1999, p. 174). From my observations, the first album is often described as "raw." This is when the band is at their truest sound, not tempted by money and large venue touring. Discussing the first album of a band is a common scene topic and is part of the subcultural esoteric knowledge. Preferring the first album of a band is a form of one-upmanship in the management of authenticity.

Bands change their sound for various reasons. Some bands may want to sell more albums and gain more exposure. Bands may change their sound to expand their own artistry and experiment with the genre. It could also be that artists become comfortable with their sound and inadvertently become polished mechanically. Others change their sound to fulfil contractual obligations from their label. When scene members discuss album discography, they are doing so because they want to demonstrate how attuned they are to new shifts in sound and styles. Knowing the origins of a band and discussing the evolution of a band's sound is part of the esoteric knowledge of scene members.

Another form of esoteric knowledge relates to the aftershows or underground shows which occur after the venues close. Aftershows take place in abandoned properties or old buildings that offer cheap rent for the space. Knowing their location and show details is esoteric knowledge. To know about the aftershows, a person must be an insider with access to the scene. In this regard, Sharon Zukin mentions Rubulad, the underground music party that changes throughout Brooklyn and is a party that operates similarly to punk aftershows. Rubulad is a rave-like party, though is not a rave. The location of the music party changes for each show, and a new password is sent via email or private blog post.

The whereabouts of the parties are exclusively intended for scene members via a controlled email list. The demise of authentic Rubulad began when the party became trendy, too popular and crowded and when its locations began to be disclosed on public blogs and other forms of social media (Zukin, 2010, p. 37). The location of Rubulad used to be esoteric knowledge. When the location is disclosed on blogs and social media, it becomes knowledge that anyone can find. Despite the success and exposure of Rubulad, it remains a thriving traveling party and is still considered authentic to some hipsters. Rubulad is also an example of how a cultural event can generate urban revival and development. As Zukin observed:

DIY (do it yourself) parties like Rubulad play an important part in the contemporary trend of urban renewal by pop culture. Places for cool cultural consumption develop an attractive image for an unlikely neighborhood, which then sparks a commercial revival, a residential influx of people with money, and, finally, the building of new luxury apartments with extravagant rents. It sounds

like the typical process of gentrification. In this case, though, down and dirty hipster culture, rather than a sanitized version of entertainment, has produced a new kind of authenticity (Zukin, 2010, p. 37).

This new sort of scene legitimacy valorizes grittification because it glorifies the old, industrial neighbourhoods of Brooklyn. The process of grittification characterizes those sorts of buildings and neighbourhoods as authentic and shifts the original uses of the neighbourhoods. Rubulad has been located (spring 2013) in the Knockdown Center in Brooklyn. The Knockdown Center was a glass factory and a door factory that has been newly renovated into a performance space and art center. The Knockdown Center is also home to exhibits and conventions, such as the Bike Cult Exhibition featured in August 2014. It is owned by the local hipperati and hosts various events that would appeal to hipsters. Like Rubulad, knowing about the Knockdown Center is esoteric knowledge. The Knockdown Center is not a place that features popular events. I found out about it while visiting The City University of New York. A student was handing out pamphlets on the sidewalk for people to attend some of its events.

Style and Symbolic Power:

Esoteric knowledge is what scene members know; scene clothing, merchandise, band preference, musical preference and grittified hangouts are what scene members have. Style is the most indicative and visual component of scene membership. It is the first scene component that people at the venues identified with because it is visual and they can process the information upon first contact. At The Empire in Portland, I had a conversation with a hipster scene member named Mike. He asked if my confederate and I were visitors from somewhere else; he recognized that we were not part of their scene.

Mike suggested beverages that he thought that we would enjoy based on what he knew about us and how we dressed. While subcultural and style assumptions may not always generate accurate results, it is accepted in scenes as a way to measure authenticity and distinguish outsiders from those within the scene.

Hebdige (1979) explains that symbolic power is apparent in the clothing and accessories of scene members. It is visible in their styles and what items they choose to wear. Hebdige illustrates the use of safety pins in punk subculture and how it is a form of expression rather than an object used for its intended purposes. Using such objects outside of their context changes the meaning and thus the object is re-presented to give it a new meaning. Hebdige argues that this is done as a form of resistance (1979, p. 17-18). The symbolic power of these objects are significant aspects of interpreting and studying music scenes:

Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalization'. As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus. Our task becomes, like Barthes', to discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as 'maps of meaning' which obscurely re-present the very contradictions they are designed to resolve or conceal (Hebdige, 1979, p. 18).

Style is prevalent and integral to several subcultures and scenes. However, punk tends to be one of the most style conscious, along with hip- hop, according to Force (2009, p. 291). Both subcultures seek out new styles when their current styles are discovered and

worn by those outside of the scene (Force, 2009, p. 299). Hipster subculture is similar, but because they do not identify with a particular type of clothing, hipster style becomes difficult to copy. The symbolic meaning, and therefore the power, of these items are constantly changing to new ones so that the hipster style remains exclusive. Hebdige expresses the importance of style in his research:

...despite these individual differences, the members of a subculture must share a common language. And if a style is really to catch on, if it is to become genuinely popular, it must say the right thing in the right way at the right time. It must anticipate or encapsulate a mood, a moment. It must embody a sensibility, and the sensibility which punk style embodied was essentially dislocated, ironic and self-aware (Hebdige, 1979, p. 122).

This applies to hipster style as well. Style is about distinction and in turn becomes an indicator of membership in the scene for those who belong. Style is what separates the scene members from the straight world and other subcultures. It demonstrates authenticity or lack thereof. Being considered a poseur or considered to lack scene legitimacy derives from not adhering to the correct codes of style. In my observations, those that tried too hard were not on the perimeter of the scene trying to get in, rather, they were treated as part of the scene. They were just not considered authentic scene members. Committed scene members still interacted with those that were not considered insiders: they swapped updates about what was new, they laughed, joked and danced together. The distinction between the legitimate members and the others is that those who lacked authenticity would not necessarily be invited to the homes of scene members to casually hang out.

What I observed was consistent with what I remembered from my previous experiences with subcultures: it was common that those that were considered to lack legitimacy hung out with another group of friends outside of the subculture. They did not dedicate their entire free time to the scene. They still found out about underground or aftershow venues and attended them. Through my observations of the scenes, the authentic members teased those that lack authenticity but did not ignore them or ridicule them because they demonstrated a subcultural interest, and were therefore viewed as having better ideals than those belonging to the straight world. Legitimate scene members may talk about why someone is trying too hard or that they are “too scene.” As Mike explained at The Empire in Portland: “yeah, they are good people, try too hard, but aren’t office shmucks, ya know.” Force argues the importance of punk’s visual appearance along with the musical knowledge as essential to building authenticity in the scene (2009, p. 298). Those that are considered to lack legitimacy may have the visual appearance though may not have the essential musical knowledge and esoteric knowledge to gain the most authenticity.

I noted conversations about subcultural capital and clothing throughout my evenings of participant observation. Some punks at Geno’s began a conversation by trading trivia about lesser-known punk bands like The Exploited and The Casualties. The conversation then changed into a discourse about fashion; what ought to be worn and what constitutes “trying too hard.” In instances where an item is worn that should not be, scene members often acknowledge the sell-out status of the band or brand that they are wearing as a way to evade someone calling them out on it. At Peppers Pub in Saint John, a group of punk scene members were teasing another punk for wearing a Green Day shirt.

Tyler, the owner of the Green Day shirt, admitted that he knew that would be the response, but chose to wear his new shirt anyway. Tyler did not lose authenticity or scene points because he admitted to knowing about Green Day's sell-out status. He reinforced that he still enjoyed the band, but also likes more hardcore music, like The Casualties. Tyler acknowledged that while lots of punks considered Green Day to lack authenticity, he respects their music. He name-dropped The Casualties to remind the scene members that he liked them too.

I discovered that The Casualties are highly regarded in most punk scenes as a hardcore and authentic band. Force observed this behavior in his research. Punk members were spared from losing scene legitimacy by acknowledging that they were wearing "the uniform," clothing or accessories that are considered "too scene" (Force, 2009, p. 300-301). However, those who lack legitimacy are still held in a higher respect than the straight world and others outside of the scene. When a scene member is called "too scene," self-mockery is a way to deflect and change the topic of conversation (Force, 2009, p. 300). An example of deflection would be to laugh it off and say something to reinforce scene authenticity by reinforcing one's place in the scene. Perhaps saying something like I have witnessed in my observations: "yeah, it is too scene – but what are you going to do about it?" Being "too scene" is also applicable to music tastes. If one expresses interest in punk bands that have generated a particularly high level of success, the interest in that band is considered "too scene." An individual would be described as "too scene" or "fake punk" if they had too many punk components to an outfit. Those who are mocking scene members for being "too scene" are discrediting a scene member's legitimacy, thus leveling up their own authenticity (Force, 2009, p. 299). Leveling up

one's own authenticity can also occur by drawing from the lack of authenticity of others and pointing it out.

Seattle's grunge scene has become the prevalent example of a music scene gone trendy. The music, clothing and lifestyle of grunge created some of the popular tastes of the dominant culture and the styles were incorporated into high fashion. As Peter Bagge, a Seattle-based cartoonist, explains:

In light of my low opinion of the whole Seattle "grunge" dress code, I was flabbergasted when fashion magazines began marketing it as a specific look that they would deliberately want to copy. It was the height of irony – the antifashion statement became the exact opposite. I still can't fathom who the driving force was behind all this nonsense either, though the Sub Pop guys seemed to be both laughing at it *and* vigorously fueling it at the same time (Bagge quoted by Prato, 2009, p. 320).

The driving force that Bagge cannot fathom are the people that want to consume antifashion because it was considered authentic, despite the irony. Jonathan Poneman, co-founder of Sub Pop records, the label that launched bands such as Nirvana and Sonic Youth, shared with Prato his insight on the mainstreaming of the Seattle scene and grunge. Poneman wrote an article for *Vogue* magazine describing grunge fashion (Prato, 2009, p. 240). James Truman, the editor in chief of *Details* magazine defined punk as antifashion and grunge as un-fashion, as in not trying to make a statement at all (Marin, 1992, para. 15). Grunge fashion, in this respect, is similar to hipster fashion; it does not want to make a statement. The popularity of grunge fashion and music interests affected the fabric of the Seattle scene, thus challenging its legitimacy. A new definition of

authenticity had to be created for the grunge scene members. While their venues and hangouts were overwhelmed with trendy locals and tourists, original scene members moved on. Like New York City or Nashville, Seattle became an influential music city (Prato, 2009, p. 240-241). The fabric of Seattle shifted economically with the additions of Seattle-based businesses like Starbucks, Microsoft and Amazon.

If style is the visual component to display subcultural authenticity, then demonstrating esoteric knowledge becomes the verbal way to articulate it. Musical tastes are necessary to scene members considering that their subculture forms predominantly around musical interests. Music is the crucial scene component:

...punk is a music-based subculture, and thus the power of musical taste in informing identity cannot be underestimated. One's tastes are deeply connected to a sense of subcultural self. Familiarity with the cultural forms of punk requires contact with the music. Ideally, this means owning recordings in the form of cassettes, CDs, vinyl records, and MP3s. The hierarchy of value relates to these being recordings of the "right" artists, that is, of artists viewed by scene members as legitimately punk (Force, 2009, p. 294-295).

Musical knowledge is essential esoteric knowledge for a subculture based on music.

Musical preference is the component where one-upmanship occurs most, as Force discovered. This was my own observations in Saint John and Portland. Scene members often discussed their favorite bands. A male punk that I met at Peppers Pub in Saint John talked about his favorite bands with my confederate and I. It was a way to relate to us, but it was more than that. Jason was sharing information about his favorite bands with us to showcase his tastes and his musical knowledge all of which are integral to the notion of

being a committed and legitimate member. Merchandise is a subcultural essential that represents the tangible goods of authenticity— it can be in the form of clothing or music ownership. In his research, Force demonstrates how wearing a pin of a band on a jacket can initiate a conversation between the wearer and the observer of the symbol. These sorts of conversations generally include the band that is on the pin, the other merchandise that each owns, how they got interested in the band and how long they have liked them (Force, 2009, p. 295). Merchandise can be in the form of music ownership (CDS, vinyl, MP3s), clothing, pins, patches, posters or flags.

There are other scene commodities that qualify as scene merchandise but are not band merchandise: clothing, footwear, jewelry, makeup and accessories like purses or backpacks. Force observed in his study of his punk scene that the ownership of vinyl albums was the most authentic form of music ownership (2009, p. 298). Owning more punk on vinyl than other scene members enhances authenticity (Force, 2009, p. 297). A music shop generally only carries vinyl album versions for a limited amount of time, especially of a first pressing. Before the recent resurgence of vinyl, it was still common at local music shops to find punk albums still being released in this format. For punks, collecting vinyl never really stopped. There was only a limited amount of vinyl albums available for the first pressing and it was a challenge to get them before they sold out. It was also difficult to find them after they were sold out. This makes the ownership of these vinyl albums a rarity, and that is integral with merchandise ownership. I observed people buying CD albums of the featured bands during and after the show. This is probably a result of CDs being cheaper and easier to produce than vinyl. More so, vinyl is delicate and runs the risk of being damaged in the mosh pit and vinyl cannot easily fit

into a backpack or purse.

For many subcultures, clothing is the most important piece of subcultural capital. Clothing is visible and publicly displays their scene status. Band merchandise, like t-shirts and patches can also be worn. The less legitimate scene members are not concerned about band merchandise that cannot be publicly displayed, such as having albums and posters at home. For the authentic scene members, the ownership of both public and private merchandise is important; the clothes are visible displays and the merchandise that they own at home can be talked about with other scene members. Owning both public and private commodities can establish authenticity, which assists in demonstrating esoteric knowledge.

While certain subcultures, especially punk, claim an anti-corporate attitude, they are still concerned with the ownership of commodities. The commodities are a particular kind, a sort that has been approved and authenticated by the scene and are not necessarily the commodities of the straight world. These are concerns of people that have the leisure time to be an authentic scene member, to purchase the “right” merchandise and to explore new music and music that is established as authentic by others. This leisure time that most subcultures have is what separates them from the straight world (Hebdige, 1979, p. 94). Their lifestyle differs from the straight world; the scene members often have free time outside of the constrictions of an eight-hour work day (Frank, 1997, p. 232). Scene members may work at places that allow for their style of clothing to be worn and have flexible schedules so that they can enjoy the nightlife. Some scene members work at the venues as well; it is not a straight world job and they are still able to watch shows and interact with scene members. Scene members do work, but they want their work to be

something meaningful. Their relationship to the market however, is more self-aware and they try to define themselves as craftspeople or artisans.

Hebdige defines artisanal capitalism as a particular form of capitalism in which punks and other subcultures partake. Artisanal capitalism is exemplified by the small shops, boutiques and small manufacturing companies that embrace hand-made items and locally crafted products (Hebdige, 1979, p. 95). City markets, cafés and restaurants should be included into the notion of artisanal capitalism; as Zukin points out, they are the new components of hip authenticity (Zukin, 2008, p. 727). Artisanal capitalism, with its locality and personal touches, can still find its way into the mainstream. The Seattle grunge scene was an example of how local places in Seattle, establishments that were part of artisanal capitalism, became popular places. A Seattle based artisanal market shop, Starbucks, became a multi-million dollar and multinational café chain. Its first location was at the Pike Place Market. Starbucks was a local coffee shop and was considered part of the Seattle grunge scene, being it was a place where people hungout for “authentic” and local coffee. Starbucks expanded in the 1990s after the grunge scene became well recognized and the streets of Seattle filled with tourists. The famous coffee shop became an international chain, but lost its scene authenticity due to its prominence.

Artisanal capitalism is still a form of capitalism, despite the fact that it glorifies local artisans over large corporations and their products. Punks, hipsters and the hipperati admire artisanal capitalism. Most scene hangouts and places to shop are classified under artisanal capitalism and are places where conversations about subcultural goods take place. Social relationships can be created and maintained through the display of goods (Corrigan, 1997, p. 60). Mary Douglas and Baron C. Isherwood explain: “Goods, in this

perspective, are ritual adjuncts; consumption is a ritual process whose primary function is to make sense of the inchoate flux of events...The most general objective of the consumer can only be to construct an intelligible universe with the goods he chooses” (1996, p. 43). Conversations for subcultures are often about the goods they own, which are usually in the forms of music and merchandise and it is their use of these goods which makes their world both intelligible and different from the straight world.

Punk attitude is one of anti-corporate capitalism. Hipsters choose to live outside the straight world and choose not to buy into the traditional forms of capitalism. Thomas Frank questions whether authenticity and hip are simply illusions (1997, p. 7). Frank argues that the illusions are integral for the scene because they create a distinction between the subculture and the straight world. Subcultures desire frivolous commodities (commodities that are not essential for basic survival) the same way that the straight world does. Both groups acquire items to impress their group of friends. For subcultures, it is to impress others in the scene, and usually involves different commodities than would be desired by the straight world (Frank, 1997, p. 15). Frank questions the validity of the attainment of authenticity for punks and hipsters. If subcultural legitimacy is often replicated and defined, it cannot be original since originality requires something new and innovative to emerge (1997, p. 229). While authenticity often is evaluated on originality, being new and innovative is not the only way to obtain scene authenticity. This is especially true of punk subcultures because they value grit more than the hipsters. Punks also draw from a canon of subculturally approved bands and clothing styles that are often from the origins of punk, though decades later are hardly innovative.

While the commodities that are being consumed differ from other subcultures and the straight world, their need to consume is the same. Their fashion style is symbolic and indicates that they belong to a subculture and scene (punks/hipsters/the hipperati), even though it is not original. It becomes a different form of authenticity. Punk, hipster and grunge are all subcultures that have been commodified and altered by mainstream consumption. Starbucks is an example of a scene hangout that belonged to the grunge scene but became mainstream, in part because people wanted a piece of Seattle's grunge scene. Subcultures also take mainstream commodities and re-purpose them into subcultural items. In both ways subcultures are still cultures of consumption, even though they may claim not to be (Hebdige, 1979, p. 103).

Belonging is important to subcultures, even if belonging requires a sense of conformity. Subcultural conformity differs from the conformity of the straight world in terms of integral commodities, but the processes for both are the same (Frank, 1997, p. 12). The belonging is evaluated by the subculture and perceived by it too. Scenes, like the straight world, have companies marketing to them. As Art Chantry, graphic designer of album covers for bands like Nirvana and Hole, pointed out, the term grunge and its concept was a marketing term that did not accurately depict the Seattle music scene (Prato, 2009, p. 242). John Leland argues that hip and the marketplace often meet, mostly via fashion trends. The commodities that are considered hip, the symbols, or, "temporary repositories for meaning" are the objects that influence the scene from the marketplace, though the scene also affects the marketplace (Leland, 2004, p. 340-341). "Like the retail theory of hip, which holds that hip exists to stimulate consumption. All this migration and immigration align hip with a flow of money. Hip may look like poverty and slackness,

but it attracts wealth (Leland, 2004, p. 346).” It only attracts wealth, because while scenes and the hipperati are creating economic development, usually in the form of artisanal capitalism, they are rarely the group that benefits financially from the growth. Leland (2004) argues that scenes require cities and that cities require scenes and hip communities since they are essential for economic development.

Conclusion:

As I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, (The Notion of Authenticity) punks use their commodities, values and common-sense attitudes to reinforce their opposition to the straight world and to the dominant class (Hebdige, 1979, p. 116). Punks condemn and challenge the ideals of the straight world and often do so by using shock tactics with their style and discourse. Though being punk goes beyond style and language – these components are part of the message: “that beyond the horror circus antics a divided and unequal society was being eloquently condemned” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 115). Punks claim moral superiority over traditional class distinctions regarding taste. By using grit as the benchmark of authenticity, punks, hipsters and the hipperati need not be measured by the ideals of the straight world. Subcultures, like punks, hipsters, the Seattle grunge scene and the hipperati deliberately separate themselves from the lifestyle of the middle class. They aim to create a lifestyle that juxtaposes and challenges the classes that claim superiority on tastes. Those in music scenes achieve superiority by claiming that their subculture is most authentic, and that class cannot dictate authenticity. In scene subcultures, authenticity is often dependent on grit and the cheap rents of the working-class neighbourhoods. But it is more than that; by living in these neighbourhoods they are also challenging the values of the wealthy and of the middle-class.

The next chapter begins with the descriptions of each venue and then moves onto the data from the participant observations that were collected between November 2011 and November 2012 in Saint John and Portland. The chapter analyzes subcultural conversations and how they involve style and esoteric knowledge. The chapter examines those components and how they relate to scene legitimacy.

Chapter Four: Venues, Style, and Esoteric Knowledge: An Ethnography of Scenes

The previous chapter discussed how cultural power wielded by subcultural groups can enable urban change and economic development. Generally, cultural power is evident when a group values certain commodities as authentic or neighbourhoods as original. Cultural power is different from economic power. One can use economic power to buy and flaunt commodities but cultural power is achieved when a group asserts its tastes over those of others. Ownership of the goods is not enough; it is the discourses, the esoteric knowledge about the goods, and the choice to talk about them publicly that defines cultural power. By claiming to enjoy the most refined and thus the most authentic commodities, a group can claim moral superiority over others. Amongst subcultures, cultural power is a sign of real commitment. It takes dedication and work for any subcultural member to maintain the moral superiority of their tribe's tastes.

Cultural and economic power are not entirely separate from each other, and how the two intersect has been the subject of much discussion. Richard Florida, for example, explains that cultural power can lead to strong economic development in cities because culture attracts wealth and wealth transforms the urban setting. Leland and Zukin stress that cultural power can be a source of economic exclusion, especially when city neighbourhoods are gentrified and branded. Exclusion and ostracism are par for the

course of gentrification. That is why Jane Jacobs has been critical of much of modern urbanization and has advocated for the creation of neighbourhoods that are economically mixed, and where the old and new can coexist without driving out those who have less economic power.

In this chapter I will focus more centrally on an ethnography of scenes, style and esoteric knowledge. While I recognize the importance of economic exclusion, my focus here is on how a scene is defined, how style is used as a marker of group identity, and how esoteric knowledge is used routinely as a way of making distinctions between insiders and outsiders. I will begin with a description of venues in both Saint John and Portland and conclude with observations of how the subcultures in both cities are similar and different from each other.

The Venues

Peppers Pub in Saint John and The Empire in Portland show a similar subcultural presence; both had a fairly high concentration of hipsters with some punks. At Peppers Pub, punks averaged between 8% and 28% of scene participants during my four evenings of observation. The hipsters averaged between 33% and 42%. During my two evenings of observations at The Empire punks averaged between 20% and 40% of participants while between 30% and 50% were hipsters. Geno's Rock Club had a high concentration of punks with very few hipsters. Both evenings had between 66% and 70% punks and between 0% (none) and 17% of hipsters (See below).

Peppers Pub on Friday June 8, 2012 featured The Junction, an indie rock band from Brampton, Ontario. The opening band was Hungry Hearts from Fredericton, New

Brunswick, a heavier sounding indie rock band. It could explain the low number of punks for that evening. The hipsters and hipperati were evenly represented that evening.

Peppers Pub on Friday June 22, 2012 featured WET GROW LIGHT, a band from Saint John, self-described as “Psychedelic Gypsy Rock, Surf-World Spiritual band” (2011, Fan page). Chris Kirby and the Marquee are described as an alternative funk band. There were a bit more punks at Peppers Pub that evening, and a high hipster and hipperati presence.

Peppers Pub on Friday October 19, 2012 featured Oh No, Theodore, an indie rock band from Fredericton. Their music featured some orchestral components. The Ray Finkles opened for them and were described as “surf rock.” This evening had the highest punk presence of all of the evenings at Peppers Pub and could be due to the surf rock of the Ray Finkles.

Peppers Pub on Saturday October 20, 2012 featured Tom Fun Orchestra, an indie rock band from Cape Breton. This was the lowest night of punk presence in my observations. But the punks that were there were enjoying the sounds of Tom Fun Orchestra and comparing them to other ska bands, notably The Specials. There was also a high representation of hipperati that evening.

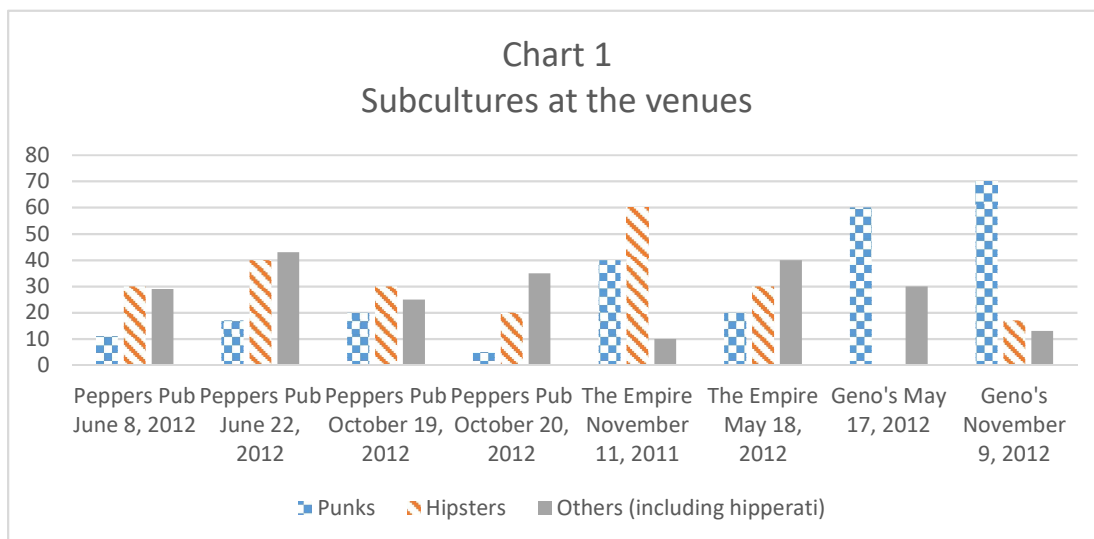
The Empire on Friday November 11, 2011 featured Town Founder, a pop punk band from Portland and they opened the evening. They were followed by The Lights Out, a skate punk band from Boston. The Mallet Brothers Band followed with their indie folk sounds. Of all of the evenings of my observations, this was the most balanced between the punks and the hipsters, though there were not many hipperati. It makes sense; there were two punk bands and an indie rock act that evening. It was the show that had the

most attendance from my observations, most likely because The Lights Out and The Mallet Brothers Band were quite popular in Portland.

The Empire on Friday May 18, 2012 featured Deep Chatham, an alternative band from North Carolina. They were the only band that played that night. The hipperati were the highest subcultural presence that evening, however there was good turnout by all three of the observed subcultures.

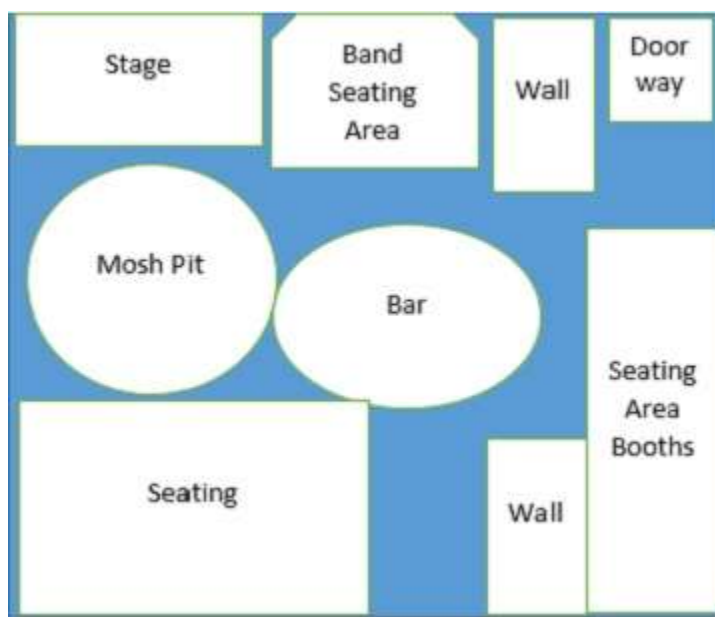
Geno's on Thursday May 17, 2012 opened with Saturns Return, a heavy metal band from Portland. They were followed by Thee Icepicks, also from Portland, who wore masks and played surf music. The feature band of the night was El Fossil, a punk band from Atlanta. There were no hipsters present this evening, perhaps due to the fact that the music was full punk and hardcore metal to open. There were a fair amount of hipperati there that evening.

Geno's on Friday November 9, 2012 featured Covered in Bees, a metal/punk band from Portland, Math The Band, an indie rock band from Providence and The Side Scrollers, a punk band from Portland. The punk attendance was very high but also included members of the hipsters and the hipperati. Because there was an indie rock band featured, it drew more hipsters on November 9th, 2012 than on May 17th, 2012 when no hipsters were observed at the venue. See Chart 1 (p.55) for comparison of subcultural presence at the venues.



Peppers Pub in Saint John

Figure 1, Peppers Pub Floor Plan



In 2011-2012, most indie rock and punk bands played at Saint John’s Peppers Pub. There have been a few additions to the indie rock circuit since I completed my participant observation. The new venues, like Panic Room, The Pub Down Under, Taco Pica, The Ale House and Peddlers Creek, did not have the consistent, scheduled events

that one expected from Peppers Pub at the time, which had regular shows on Fridays and Saturdays, and featured bands during other evenings for special appearances of artists that may be on tour.

Located on the ground level of Market Square, Peppers Pub is in uptown Saint John. In the daytime it is a restaurant named Lemongrass Thai Fare, one of the few Thai restaurants in the uptown area. The establishment opens as Peppers Pub at eleven every evening, unless there is a special circumstance or a traveling, more prolific musician scheduled to play. Peppers Pub is the only one of the three venues where I conducted observations that was a restaurant in the daytime. The late start time leaves approximately three hours for the bands to play and for the scene members to hang out. During the four shows I attended at Peppers Pub, three of those evenings resulted in people being encouraged by staff to hurry out after the shows since the pub was closing.

Peppers Pub can hold two hundred and fifty people at their shows. Scene members often described the inside of Peppers Pub as rustic, partially because it is located on the first floor of Market Square, which used to function as a warehouse and docking pier prior to being made into a space for pubs, restaurants and shops. Peppers Pub features brick walls, big windows, black tables, a small stage and a wooden bar. The leather couches located to the left of the stage are generally reserved for the featured bands to relax before and after their set (see figure 1, Peppers Pub Floor Plan). Scene members' comments about the atmosphere at Peppers Pub use the language of authenticity, especially when they describe how "real" or "raw" the place looks and feels.

The Empire in Portland

Figure 2, The Empire First Layout for 2011

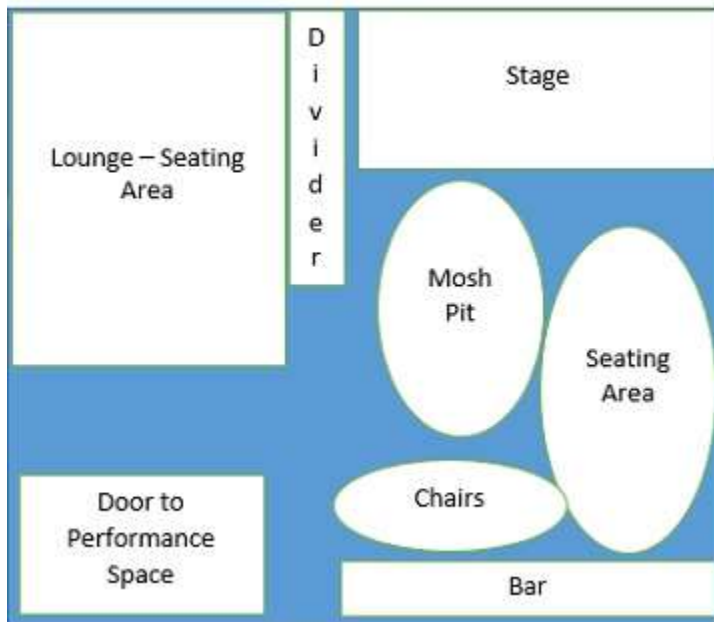
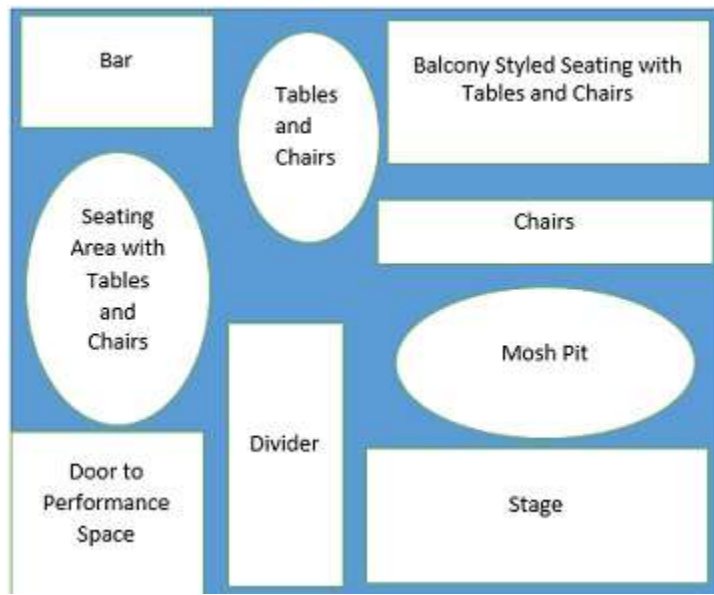


Figure 3, The Empire Second Layout for 2012



Portland's The Empire is located in the downtown of the city. The pub, located upstairs, is separated from the music venue space. At the time of my observations, the pub was called The Empire Kitchen and served the standard pub fare. During a

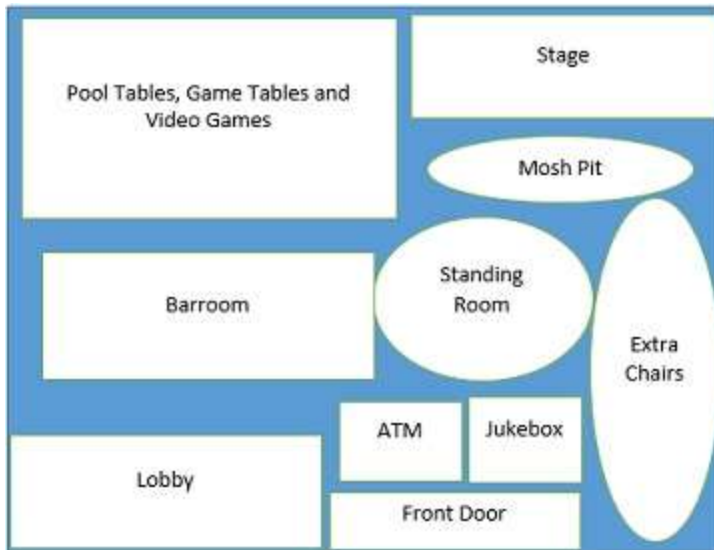
discussion with a male employee, he remarked that while the owner of The Empire operated both the kitchen and the performance space, it was the employees at the performance venue who booked the bands. The venue can hold up to three hundred people and The Empire is Portland's main music venue that features indie, folk and punk rock. The upstairs of The Empire is open only when there is a show. Typically, shows begin around seven in the evening and end around midnight. When only one band is featured, the band plays a longer set with an intermission. Customarily, two or more bands play. The longer sets provide opportunities to feature more bands each evening. In contrast, Peppers Pub only has three hours allotted for live music. The Empire has a slow progression to closing time – usually the bands finish up half an hour prior to closing, allowing people to socialize, as recorded music plays in the background. People at The Empire were a tighter-knit community in comparison to the scene members at Peppers Pub, something that could be attributed to having longer shows and therefore more opportunities to interact.

The Empire appeals to hipsters, punks, and hipperati and has a loft inspired look: brick walls, older, smaller windows, studio lamps, bistro tables, a wooden bar, wooden floors and a large wooden door that separates the music venue from the stairs that lead down to the pub and to the outside door. Once down the stairs, one can either go outside, or enter the pub. Scene members told me that the downstairs pub is usually a popular meeting place before and after shows. In 2013, the new owners renovated the downstairs into an upscale Chinese restaurant. The previous mint-green walls and old, wooden, traditional pub tables were removed, and the space seems disconnected from the

performance space, it was explained to me that scene members are not going to the Chinese restaurant as much as they used to go to the pub.

Geno's Rock Club in Portland

Figure 4, Geno's Rock Club Floor Plan



Like The Empire, Geno's is located in downtown Portland on Congress Street, but in the less grittified end of the street. The sidewalks outside of The Empire are made of brick and there are benches, trees, and a small park. The sidewalks in front of Geno's lack any ornamental design, and the venue is located near a garage station. Geno's architectural aesthetic is urban industrial, which may explain why the establishment is mostly patronized by punks. Geno's can hold a crowd of two hundred people. The inside looks as though it has been untouched since its beginnings in 1983. Nevertheless, Geno's has a digital jukebox that plays new music, and features pool tables and an air hockey table. The ATM machine and the jukebox are in the lobby, where there are benches and chairs. A small barroom is near the entrance for the performance space and games tables. The walls are dark black and the unpainted walls leave the brick exposed. Unlike the other two venues, Geno's does not serve food. Their drinks are a bit cheaper than at the

other venues; there are several beer options but a limited selection of other alcoholic beverages. Scene members told me that the original owner of Geno's, who is now deceased, was considered to be an early punk, thus contributing to the authenticity narrative.

The Importance of Subcultural Style

Hebdige (1979, p. 19) argued that there is a message to subcultural style and appearance. Style is how people express their identity and how they identify with a group. Punk and hipster styles differ purposefully from the straight world, and to an extent, from each other. The articles of clothing that scene members select to wear are indicative of their commitment to the scene and provide a way for members to visually evaluate the authenticity of others. According to Force (2009, p. 291), punk is one of the most style-focused subcultures. Focusing on style is unavoidable when studying subcultures and it is relatively easy for me to determine which subculture a scene member belongs to by looking at their clothing. There is a level of cultural rigidity with subcultural style codes. These codes are used ritualistically and I observed that the clothing and accessories worn at the venues I attended remained consistent amongst scene members.

Still, there are nuances of style that one must always attend to. Even though the hipperati are not a style-conscious and musical subculture, they do have a recognizable style that is sometimes difficult to place. I identified the hipperati as those that did not dress like punks or hipsters, but like them, their clothing still differed from the straight world. Their clothing was comparable to a hipster style but they wore artistic jewelry. Worn by both women and men, the jewelry is exactly the sort that one would find in an

art gallery: unique silver pieces that make an impact statement like a work of art. In my observations, the hipperati mostly wore dark colors, such as black, grey or brown, and several of them had on knit ponchos. Force (2009) explains that subcultural style remains similar across cities.

Punk Style

Rare clothing and band merchandise can generate conversations about authenticity and cultural capital. At Geno's Rock Club, one punk complimented another on his Misfits hoodie, adding that he knew that the hoodie was rare. The Misfits-wearing punk beamed, and admitted to finding it in Boston. The whole exchange was a demonstration of esoteric knowledge about Misfits merchandise and how difficult it was to find. The hoodie was a valuable item based on musical taste, and it was a way to express and claim scene membership. Perhaps one item that expresses both scene membership and the peril of fashion trends for members are Doc Martens boots. Once marketed as boots for the working class, Doc Martens were later adopted by punks. But when the company realized the wider appeal of their footwear, it produced more styles and color options. William Ryan Force noted that, in his punk scene, Doc Martens were seldom worn and no longer considered legitimate.

In contrast, I observed Doc Martens at all three venues I attended. The black iconic Doc Martens were the footwear of choice worn by punks, though I had seen a floral-patterned pair and a red pair at Geno's in Portland. Some participants wore boots similar in look to Doc Martens but did not have the iconic label tag on the back of the boots, and other pairs had a silver side zipper, which is how I knew they were not Docs. Other black boots had buckles and no laces and were not similar to Docs at all. From my

observations, some punks perceive Docs as common amongst the subculture and therefore insist on buying other kinds of boots. This was a conversation that frequently reoccurred in my own punk scene experiences from 1999-2002.

Another pair of shoes worn by punks are the Converse Chuck Taylors. Converse Chuck Taylors were once an athletic sneaker, but were introduced into the punk world by the Ramones and later worn by alternative rock figures like Kurt Cobain and by members of the rock band Weezer. I mostly observed the hi-top Chuck Taylors on punks – hipsters were more apt to wear the regular Converse and not the hi-tops. They are commonly referred to as “Chucks.” It seems that Converse Chuck Taylors have been recently exploited for commercial interests by John Varvatos, the same designer who took over the old CBGB location on The Bowery, to market and sell punk authenticity. Recently, there were frayed versions of Chuck Taylors at the old CBGB location, costing its buyers roughly one hundred US dollars. There are also limited-edition Kurt Cobain Chuck Taylors that can be purchased, starting from sixty USD. This is an example of commodifying authenticity and scene members would not buy into that.

The punks that I observed also wore Dickies clothing. The punks adopted Dickies, a brand that makes working clothes for labour jobs, and wore the work pants and work jackets of the brand. I observed several people at all three venues, both male and female, wearing Dickies clothing – mostly the work coat, the work pants and the plain hoodies. You can see the red tab of the Dickies brand that they put on their clothes. Both Doc Martens and Dickies are brands that have durability for the working person – for the punk scene member, these clothes were accessible, and durable for the lifestyle of mosh pits and partying. Their symbolic meaning is rooted in the origins of punk and working-

classiness which is borrowed from the skinheads, early punk looks from the 1970s and 1980s.

Leather, denim and tartan were worn by punks at all three venues. These fabrics have been traditionally punk – they have been worn by London and New York punks since the early 1970s. These items were often paired with punk band t-shirts and hoodies. Leather and denim items consisted of jackets, pants and skirts. Tartan pants and skirts were common, though not as common as the leather and denim. Some skate punk styles were observed at all three venues. Skate punk style derives from the 1990s-skate punk movement inspired by The Warped Tour, a concert festival featuring punk music and skateboard events. Skate punks often wore skateboard brand clothing and sneakers. It was easy to identify the skate punks, since the skateboard brands were visible on their shirts and skate-brand sneakers.

Punk's association with dog collars, spikes, bondage wear and mesh clothing can be attributed to the London boutique, Sex, which existed from 1974-1976. In 1976, Sex reopened as Seditinaires where co-owners Malcolm McLaren and Vivien Westwood designed their own clothing, as well as sold fetish and bondage wear. Vivien was the main designer and McLaren managed The Sex Pistols (Vivien Westwood, n.d.). The boutique is most famously known for some of its punk clientele and workers, most notably, the members of The Sex Pistols. Dog collars, spiked jewelry (such as bracelet cuffs, rings, earrings and longer necklaces) have been inspired from this punk boutique, which was the first of its kind, reinventing how these items were used. These accessories continue to be 'authentic.' Punks still wear them, even after several decades of being in the punk style canon. It is viewed as an homage, though only if worn for the right

reasons. Punks do not fear that these items are dated or unfashionable because it takes self-assurance to wear them. Wearing them is a commitment to the tribe. Unlike hipster merchandise that can be mainstreamed into the straight world, it is very rare that the straight world ever has interest in these punk accessories. Dog collars, spikes, bondage wear and mesh clothing were spotted on punks at all three venues. There were more instances at Geno's Rock Club of people wearing several of these items. Punks at the other venues were observed to never wear more than two of such accessories.

Punk hairstyles that I observed were styles that were popularized by the New York and London punk scenes in the 1970s such as mohawks, spikes and bihawks. I also noted several female punks with the Chelsea, a hairstyle that was popularized by skinheads in the 1970s and 1980s. What is considered authentic punk hair has not changed very much, considering that these 1970s styles are still incorporated into punk subcultures. However, one does not need dramatic punk styles to be considered punk. There were several short hair cuts for men and several "straight world" haircuts for women, such as bobs. There were hardcore styles and less hardcore styles in each group at most venues. Geno's was the main venue where there were significantly more hardcore hairstyles in comparison to the other venues.

Hipster Style

Hipsters have a wide range of clothing that they wear and their style can be called normcore. Normcore is almost the opposite of punk's hardcore. Punk's hardcore styles aim to shock people; normcore aims to blend in. The term normcore was coined by a trend-forecasting group called the K-Hole. The group of brand consultants are New Yorkers in their twenties who generated a report called "Youth Mode: A Report on

Freedom.” Normcore did not begin as a fashion trend or statement. As with both punk and grunge, normcore began as a philosophy and as a lifestyle. K-Hole places the rise of normcore in the period after the death of Kurt Cobain (K-Hole, 2003.p 14).

Hipsters most often gravitate towards the normcore style of dress code within the subculture. Essentially, normcore is a style that lacks specific customs and encourages its followers to dress plainly and simply with no logos, large prints or symbols, and to avoid new trends despite normcore itself being a trend, of course. Hipsters generally wear plain denim, plain t-shirts and plain hoodies – all clothing that lacks logos and prints. This is contrasted with the punk dress code of wearing punk brands and patches. While normcore does not want to be associated with any particular group of people, the hipsters have adopted normcore as their code of style. Lots of people who are not hipsters may wear plain clothing - normcore goes beyond wearing plain clothes. It also incorporates items, along with the plain clothes, that were once in style and re-presents them as hip again. This is comparable to the punk practices of re-presenting objects in fashion, giving items like safety pins new meaning. “A little more than a month ago, the word “normcore” spread like a brush fire across the fashionable corners of the Internet, giving name to a supposed style trend where dressing like a tourist — non-ironic sweatshirts, white sneakers and Jerry Seinfeld-like dad jeans — is the ultimate fashion statement” (Williams, 2014, para. 4). Wallet chains, white Jerry Seinfeld sneakers paired with classic wash blue jeans, aviator sunglasses and bomber jackets have been included in the normcore. I spotted these articles throughout my observations, though not everyone wore all the items listed at once. Normcore differentiates itself from the trendsetters by

ensuring that there is no specific code to observe; yet normcore is a style, a trend that focuses on plain and ordinary articles of clothing (K-Hole, 2003, p. 6).

“In the style of an audio equalizer, Mass Indie culture mixes weirdness with normalness until it levels out. This is the dogma of: old jean jacket over an evening dress, expensive leisure activity in an industrial space, one party animal per party” (K-Hole, 2003, p. 15). In my observations, I did see hipsters wearing the white Jerry Seinfeld sneakers in Portland and did not see any in Saint John. Hipsters in Portland wore the bright white sneakers, the leather bomber jackets with light 1990s styled denim. Denim button chambray shirts were common. Some women wore long floral skirts paired with baggy t-shirts or with denim shirts or jackets. Hipsters in both cities mostly “mixed weirdness with normalness until it levels out style” (K-Hole, 2003, p. 15) – the old jean jackets with a dress or on top of a dress shirt, men’s sports coat on top of ratty t-shirts and Converse Chuck Taylors with dresses and dress pants. In my observations, fedoras, beanies, paperboys and trucker hats were commonly worn by hipsters.

For hipsters, the dress code contains symbolic power in the form of irony; the dress code that has no custom (Plevin, 2008: para 4). The lack of symbolic objects becomes the symbolic power. This is why hipsters rarely have conversations about band t-shirts – in part because they mostly wear plain clothing. When hipsters do wear band shirts, the bands are usually undiscovered. This makes it difficult for conversations about bands to begin over a shirt. But more so, hipsters also require nonchalance in their authenticity; therefore, being enthused about the shirt of another person is uncommon. Throughout my observations, it was more common for hipsters to talk about a new and undiscovered band. If a band gained too much exposure, even when they were not

mainstream, they were thought to have sold out. As is the case with the punks, hipsters wearing band shirts are showcasing their interests. I did not encounter an instance where a shirt instigated a conversation with the hipsters as had been the case with the punks. This was something new that I observed when comparing the differences between the punks and the hipsters. Perhaps this is because there is not an implied catalogue, or canon, of scene-approved artists for hipsters as there is for the punks.

Demonstrating Esoteric Knowledge

William Ryan Force (2009) suggested that if style is the visual test for authenticity, then esoteric knowledge is the verbalized evaluation. Force uses the term “esoteric knowledge” (p. 303) to describe the insights and conversations that operate within scenes. I observed conversations about esoteric knowledge at all three venues in both cities – at every single show especially among punks, hipsters and hipperati. There did not appear to be a subculture that participated in esoteric discourse more frequently than the others. All three subcultures participate in the game of conversational authenticity. Punks and hipsters have criteria used to consider someone an authentic scene member. Authenticity is the ultimate scene goal and the reason one wants to be the “realest” or the most genuine. Being the most genuine translates to being one of the most committed scene members.

Generally, esoteric knowledge is staged around music and bands, but it can be applied to any commodity or practice that relates to the scene. The esoteric knowledge of punks reflects on how hardcore they are, how dedicated they are to their scene and to punk rock bands and artists. Hipsters differ in this respect. Their esoteric knowledge often reflects that their tastes in things ought to be undiscovered. The unrecognized

bands, styles and venues are considered the worthiest. The less that people recognize the new hangout or band, the more legitimate. The K-Hole calls this the “you’re so special nobody knows what you’re talking about” framework (K-Hole, 2003, p. 20).

Punks have a canon of accepted well-known bands and they use this knowledge to enhance their status within the tribe. This is not the case for hipsters. Hipster style is more inclusive, while their esoteric knowledge is exclusive. Hipster normcore clothing style, for instance, tries to be inclusive so that everyone can potentially be a part of it. Normcore does not try to be like the straight world, which normalizes people through adherence to dominant conventions. In general, hipsters have more forms of esoteric knowledge than punks do. There is more variety to their knowledge. In fact, their knowledge can often be encyclopedic. And commitment to a broad and sometimes obscure knowledge can be used to exclude others from entering their conversations.

The hipperati show a slightly different use of esoteric knowledge. The hipperati, as Zukin describes them, includes artists, graphic designers, chefs, baristas, writers and students. The hipperati are people who attend venues, though not regularly like scene members, nor do they adhere to the scene style. However, the hipperati are also on a quest for authenticity by seeking out original spaces and music. Places like The Empire, Geno’s and Peppers Pub provide the hipperati with places to consume live music culture without being integrated into the subcultures. They are accepted into the venues but not as part of committed members of the scene. Perhaps the hipperati have their own sets of codes, rules and knowledge. There did not seem to be a particular clothing style amongst them, though many of them were free of logos and wore black, grey and navy blue clothes. They also wore unique pieces of jewelry and knitted articles of clothing. The

hipperati liked to discuss where they worked; it was as though their career defined them because they worked in artistic sorts of jobs, or were students who were passionate about their studies - usually art school in Portland at the Maine College of Art.

At The Empire, a group of hipsters were boasting that they personally knew most of the members of The Mallet Brothers Band. One punk was boasting to another at Peppers Pub that he knew the members of The Ray Finkles. Claiming to personally know the members of the band ranks as esoteric knowledge because these are details that fans would not be privy to. Personal information is the highest level of insider knowledge. The people who claim to personally know the band are asserting their legitimacy. At Peppers Pub, for example, two hipsters mentioned Giraffecycle, a website and forum that advertises upcoming shows in New Brunswick. The forum has a stronger focus on Saint John, probably because it is based there. One girl labelled the website as a sell-out and indicated that she believed that the website shifted its focus since its origins because of the change in site managers. It seems that there were changes around 2006, according to the Giraffecycle site (Giraffecycle, ca. 2015). She believed that the newer managers of the site were “trying too hard.” One must be a scene member or a local to know about Giraffecycle. They were discussing the people that managed the website, so the managers must be people that they knew, at least by reputation. Discussing the perceived authenticity of Giraffecycle and the change in managers demonstrated insider knowledge. When one of the hipsters mentioned that she was one of the first users of Giraffecycle, she was indicating that she was part of the website’s origins.

Other forms of esoteric knowledge focus on bands popular by punk and indie rock standards. Since indie rock music is a genre that generates underground or cult

followings, they are not the sorts of bands that sell out arenas or coliseum concerts. At Peppers Pub, two female hipsters discussed the indie rock band The Junction.

Hipster Girl 1: The Junction is good, but they sold out.

Hipster Girl 2: How did they sell out?!

Hipster Girl 1: When they signed on to Universal...they decided to sell their music out to make money.

Hipster Girl 2: But now they're on their own independent [label]...

Hipster Girl 1: Yeah, The Junction is OK...It's still too late...I just can't really get into them again...

Both girls shared the same set of knowledge, but they differed on their assessment of authenticity about the band. Both would be considered authentic scene members because they effectively demonstrated their esoteric knowledge. Demonstrating insider knowledge is more important than sharing the same opinion. Debates are common at music venues since it is how scene members interact. These are debates that outsiders would not be able to have because they do not possess the necessary information to participate. Debating esoteric facts demonstrates insider knowledge and the passion for the scene.

At Peppers Pub, a punk named Jason asked me what my favorite Dead Kennedys album was after he heard me talking about the band to my confederate. *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* was my response and he nodded with a smirk. "I know it is typical" I responded, "but it has "Kill the Poor" on it. Jason responded with a nod of approval: "Exactly, no one can ignore the album with their realest song on it! That song is so true to today, what we face around here, ya know? I'm just glad you didn't say "I fought the

law” [song] as your favorite – that’s what everyone says, and it must have been good, ya know, but it’s a sell-out song and all the too-scene kids say it’s their favorite.”

Labelling “I Fought the Law” as a sell-out song is how scene members express what they consider to be authentic, thus enjoying that song would be to lack authenticity according to punk scene standards. It is reverse snobbery because scene members would disapprove of people appreciating “I Fought the Law,” even though it is a song by one of their favorite bands. I find it conflicting that someone is considered to lack authenticity because they enjoy a “sell-out song” by a scene approved artist; is it not better to like a “sell-out” Dead Kennedys song than to like a pop band like ABBA? My conversation with Jason then shifted to the band NOFX, a 1990s-skate punk band, when he asked me which album of theirs was my favorite. I responded with *So Long and Thanks for All the Shoes*. Jason nodded in approval and responded: “you must be a real fan of them guys, because no one even knows about that album.” He laughed and added: “My buddy has that one on vinyl, it’s hard to find on CD, never mind the vinyl!” He told me that he thought that NOFX was the “real deal,” but that the newer bands on the Fat Wreck Chords label were copycat sellouts.

He knew that by referencing NOFX lead singer Fat Mike’s label that I could not deny his knowledge of NOFX as an important skate punk band. Jason’s esoteric knowledge was about NOFX, the genre of skate punk and about rare vinyl albums. By knowing someone that owned a rare vinyl of my favorite NOFX album, he ensured that I would consider him an authentic and knowledgeable punk. Jason then confirmed that he respected Chris Kirby and the Marquee, the featured band at Peppers Pub that evening, because they were different “and not trying to be the Pixies, Sonic Youth or Eric’s Trip

like other indie bands always do.” Jason even demonstrated esoteric knowledge about “other indie bands,” which confirmed that he was a regular at Peppers Pub.

At the Tom Fun Orchestra show at Peppers Pub, there were five punks discussing ska and comparing The Tom Fun Orchestra to The Specials. Relating the Cape Breton, Nova Scotia band to the iconic ska band was how the conversation began. They discussed The Specials in relation to their favorite songs and the albums that they listened to the most. The punks deliberated when The Specials formed as a band, and how they influenced current ska and indie rock bands. They were trading bits of trivia with one another and discussing the discography of The Specials. Some of them owned vinyl albums by The Specials. Force argues that the ultimate claim to authenticity is flaunting which vinyl one owns (Force, 2009, p. 298). Not only is it important to own those albums, but choosing to talk about them and their edition is a mark of a real insider.

Conclusion:

The symbolic use of power can be visually displayed and viewed via fashion and clothing style, while the conversations used by scene members demonstrate their esoteric knowledge and insider status. Membership in each subculture usually implies knowledge of the music, the essential symbols and merchandise, and having a proficient knowledge of these can enhance one’s status and confirm legitimacy as a member of the scene (Force, 2009, p. 241). Such practices were evident in my observation of music scenes in both Saint John and Portland.

In my ethnography of the music scenes found in the two cities, a few patterns emerge. There were hipsters at Peppers Pub who thought that my description of The Empire made the venue sound exciting. The Empire is an exciting place but it does not

differ greatly from Peppers Pub. One difference between Saint John and Portland was that people that I spoke with at Peppers Pub did not live in Saint John (they were from the surrounding communities of Moncton, Fredericton and Sussex), while most people that I talked with in Portland lived in the city. The groups that were from out of town mostly hung around the people that they came with, though there were a few instances in my observations when people from Saint John were acquainted with scene members from Fredericton. Perhaps, it is because of the proximity and the sharing of bands amongst the three main cities and Sussex. Scene members in Saint John were more apt to stay in their groups, while scene members in Portland temporarily engaged in conversations with other groups. It could be the case that the scene members in Portland have more time together to hang out since the shows are longer. In Portland, the shows are done early enough so participants can stay at the venue and talk about the show afterward. Or, they could go somewhere else to hangout because other places are still open. This is not the case in Saint John, considering most shows end at the closing time for most establishments.

Portland has Geno's Rock Club for the punks and Saint John's punks share Peppers Pub with hipsters. The hipperati were present at all three venues, indicating that they enjoy several genres of music. This is probably because they feel freer to explore various venues since they are not tied to one specific genre as the punks and hipsters are. Since the hipperati encompass several professions and backgrounds there is more variance in their musical tastes. As I have outlined in this chapter, scene members, such as punks, hipsters and hipperati, have a different relationship pertaining to style, but all engage to various degrees in conversational games that aim to demonstrate their own

commitment to the authenticity of a scene and their legitimacy within it. These conversations rely heavily on the use of esoteric knowledge, and it is through the display of this knowledge that one's rank within the group is evaluated. One must, however, have the right balance to pull off this performance. Too much enthusiasm can make one "too scene" and too little can make one inauthentic. The next chapter concludes this thesis and explores future research that is suggested by these findings.

Chapter Five: The Conclusion

My thesis used participant observation to examine how urban environment and subcultural styles intersect. I have found that the two sometimes reinforce each other and at other times work to undermine the creation of what Jane Jacobs has called a healthy and functional urban setting. When the two work together harmoniously there is a lively urban life where people from different ethnic, gender, race and economic strata meet, rub shoulders, exchange ideas, or simply tolerate each other. However, this is not the way it usually turns out. Urban centers can be a mecca for subcultural groups, drawing people in because of their cheap rents and bohemian atmosphere, but they can quickly transform into areas of exclusions, especially when gentrification and branding begin to dominate. Zukin's work has discussed this later phenomena and it suggests that this has been the norm in a global city like New York. Small cities like Portland and Saint John have a different set of issues. Smaller cities do not have the population base to support several venues, galleries, unique shops and restaurants as larger cities have. Smaller cities find solutions to make these places viable, and there is a need for local studies to explore how these alternatives can be developed. An example of this is Saint John's Peppers Pub: by day it is a Thai restaurant that becomes a music venue by night. Sharing restaurant and

venue space is one way that smaller cities differ from larger cities. Smaller cities can promote scenes using this type of dual use strategy for restaurants and venues. Portland's artists use Congress Street during the evenings with music shows as a public, outdoor gallery. Galleries are not open late in Portland, and this is a solution for displaying art by artists' at hours during which scene members and the hipperati are out in force.

A potential study opportunity could be to analyze Saint John or Portland in relation to how they would rank on Richard Florida's bohemian index as creative cities. Studies could be conducted with scenes and different genres of music. Genres such as country, electronica, folk and hip-hop also have large followings and develop scenes in urban spaces. Florida's creative cities model is contentious and Florida has even himself admitted so in his latest book. He overemphasized the role of creative groups and how their role played in emerging cities, and underestimated the role that economic power plays in urban development and gentrification. He later recognized that artists, musicians, and the working-class were being displaced by the professional class and the wealthy (2017, p. 6-7). Florida noted that the decline of the working-class neighbourhoods also emphasized the dark side of modern urban renewal because its inequalities only benefit a small few. More studies are needed to examine carefully the role that economic power and symbolic inclusions have in urban development.

Future work about the economies of cities and how the city is shaped by its economy would enhance what this thesis was unable to explore. Some cities develop strategies for the economy that it wants to have. Other cities are well developed economically and strive for creative and cultural aspects. Most cities strive to be places where people want to travel or move to. Global cities have set this sort of precedence

because they provide jobs, attractions and other sorts of urban allure. These sorts of cities go against the theories of Jane Jacobs, mostly because they have eliminated the working-classes. They cannot afford to live in these gentrified city centers.

While analyzing the downtowns for this study, I became familiar with several local businesses in both Saint John and Portland. The local businesses can often build active public spaces for culture which, as Jane Jacobs (1961) suggests, "...are necessary to the safety and public life of streets and neighbourhoods, and appreciated for their convenience and personal quality, can make out successfully in old buildings..." (p. 188). These are the sorts of stores that people can find in downtowns, and are the opposite of chain stores and restaurants. Chain stores are symbolic of standardization and do not create the sorts of artistic and engaging culture that great cities maintain. It would be of interest to analyze how the local businesses in particular neighbourhoods change over time and how gentrification and grittification impact them. Analyzing these trends would be another fascinating aspect of studying local businesses and how some of them are dual purposed, like Peppers Pub.

Future studies could focus on class and tastes in alternative music scenes. During my participant observation, it was clear that working-classness was a component in the cities of Saint John and Portland, especially in terms of punks. To punks, the notion of authenticity has nothing to do with economic power or high culture. They use authenticity as the symbolic tool to determine what punk taste is at the moment. It would be useful to study working-classness and other genres, such as country and heavy metal. Other research can also focus on the white middle-class adaptation of hip hop. How these working class subcultures aid or subvert the discourse of grittification would also be

relevant.

Gender and scenes would be especially relevant for future studies. There are distinctions between female punks and female hipsters in terms of how they relate to their fellow male scene members, and even how they relate to each other. The role that women assume in these scenes, in both cities, or in other cities could have been highlighted more. In my observations, it was uncommon to see a group of females, but it was common to see a male-only group in both punk and hipster subcultures, or to see a group of males and females. Another opportunity would be to study gender in relation to the two subcultures; how punk women differ from hipster women or how punk men differ from hipster men. Gender and scenes could also focus on how homosexuality is viewed in punk and hipster subcultures.

Authenticity was a significant aspect of this thesis, and a study where the focus solely concentrates on scene authenticity would be expansive. Authenticity was the benchmark that people within the scene used to evaluate people and commodities in the scene, and to evaluate scene hangouts, neighbourhoods and cities. The value of scene legitimacy was applied to clothing, music, places and bands. Determining authenticity occurred by showcasing the essential insider and esoteric knowledge through conversations. Authenticity demonstrated how genuine a scene member was and how “real” they were perceived by other scene members. There could easily have been an entire thesis dedicated solely to scene discourse and legitimacy. Authenticity could be examined in terms of leveling-up, scene tastes, and moral superiority claims with which punk and indie rock scenes are familiar.

It would be interesting for future studies to determine how Peppers Pub in Saint

John compares to Moncton's Plan B, The Esquire, or Tide and Boar music venues. Plan B and the Tide and Boar tend to have good turnouts, though there are rarely subcultural traces that can be found at these sorts of venues. These venues are neighbourhood pubs and often have people that live nearby attend, regardless of events or artists. Another aspect would be to conduct studies in other cities in different countries. There are aspects to consider when conducting studies in other countries, such as laws, policies, legal drinking ages and zoning regulations.

Saint John and Portland have the essential functionality that make cities attractive and economically strong, and are examples of creative cities. There is a mix of building purposes, and a variety of new and older buildings, the sort of neighbourhoods that Jane Jacobs (1961) prescribes for cities. There are also instances of subcultural takeover in some cities, which undermine the original fabric of neighbourhoods. Esoteric knowledge and scene exclusivity are part of the functions that create the takeover. The discourse and exchanges of esoteric knowledge do not differ significantly from the punks in Saint John to those in Portland, and are also similar to the exchanges that William Ryan Force (2009) found in his own participant observation. The hipsters observed in Saint John and in Portland are very similar in their style and interactions. Saint John and Portland are cities that have several thriving hipster hangouts. Hip needs a place to grow and people to grow with it, as John Leland (2004) argued. Scenes cannot exist without an urban landscape, because cities provide a large population of people that can form communities of interest. Subcultures need a good number of people to thrive and survive. Cities benefit from subcultures and communities of interest because they provide impressive hangouts and shops that would not otherwise exist. These places reinforce the economic

development of the city, and keep it unique, alluring and authentic. Authentic cities are where these subcultures need to be, and they are perhaps the only cities where they will be found, as Zukin (2010) argues. Cities like Saint John and Portland have managed to maintain the essential balance of charm and grit, and this is what makes them cities with thriving subcultures and scenes.

On their quest for authenticity, punks and hipsters engaged in discourse surrounding esoteric knowledge. They utilized reverse snobbery and one-upmanship in order to position themselves as authentic amongst their respective subcultures. Style was the visual component to subcultural membership, but their conversations were the verbal cues about their scene. Both style and esoteric knowledge were aspects of the evaluations that subcultures often use to rank scene commitment in regards to perceived authenticity. Though I had not anticipated the hipperati when I set out to do this research, they were an integral subculture at all three venues. Some evenings of observations the hipperati were the subcultural majority. Their esoteric knowledge was based on the local art scene and they tended to be more self-focused than subculturally focused. They still sought authenticity and engaged in discourse surrounding esoteric knowledge. They often enjoyed talking about their artistic lines of work. Punks, hipsters and the hipperati were similar to their counterparts in the other city. Peppers Pub and The Empire were also quite similar in terms of aesthetic look and the scene vibe. Both had restaurants as part of their establishments in common. Punks, hipsters and the hipperati all engage in the game of conversational authenticity via the use of esoteric knowledge and in a lot of ways this was more integral than subcultural style. Without the visual subcultural clues of style, subcultures could still be identified.

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Glossary

Cultural Power: Cultural power is associated with the moral superiority and esoteric knowledge from subcultures and their appeals to authenticity. This power exists when scenes and subcultural codes are valued more than wealth or economic gains. It is the appeals to the authenticity that subcultures pursue to strengthen their presence within the subculture and in contrast to those outside of the scene.

Esoteric Knowledge: “Familiarity with cultural objects, along with the embodiment of associated knowledge in practice, is treated as second nature, pressuring participants to deal adeptly in these forms in order to be accepted as legitimate members” (Force, 2009: 291).

Force uses the term “esoteric knowledge” to describe the insight and acknowledgement of particular facts and rules that scenes have. The essential esoteric knowledge differs for each scene and subculture. William Ryan Force uses the term “esoteric knowledge” (Force, 2009: 303) to describe the insight and acknowledgement of facts and rules that scenes have. It is the demonstrations of esoteric knowledge that prove moral superiority within subcultures and in contrast with those outside of the scene.

Grittification: A term that I had created, grittification is the process in which the subcultures and/or the hipperati enjoy the current existing structures and will forgo the new quirky coffee shop for the gritty diner. In general, punks value grit more than hipsters. Admiring something for the significance of its perceived grit rather than for what the establishment actually is.

Hipperati: The hipperati is a term created by Sharon Zukin that describes a group of people that are not scene members. The hipperati are people that work outside of the

straight world and its typical nine-to-five jobs that feature paid benefits, vacation time and seniority. They live like artists or are artists. The hipperati work at artistic or at creative jobs. They work as freelancers, contract workers or shift workers so that they have a flexible schedule. These jobs range from, but are not limited to, graphic designers, web designers, interior designers, artists, writers, actors, chefs, baristas, filmmakers, and musicians.

Hipster: Hipster esoteric knowledge is more exclusive and less inclusive than that of the punks.

In general, hipsters have more forms of esoteric knowledge than punks do. Like the punks, the hipsters have esoteric knowledge about the music, but they also have more topics that demonstrate esoteric knowledge. The topics they discuss are more apt to involve artisanal capitalism than the conversations of punks. The esoteric knowledge of hipsters often reflects that their tastes are undiscovered, original and thus the most authentic. The undiscovered bands, styles and places are considered the most authentic. This differs from punks and renders the hipsters to be more of an exclusive subculture – the “you’re so special nobody knows what you’re talking about” framework (K-Hole, p.20).

Moral Superiority: Moral superiority claims authenticity by excluding others (Zukin, 2010: 21). Claiming moral superiority is synonymous with refined tastes – tastes refined with authenticity rather than economic power. It can be described as a form of reverse snobbery: being against anything elite meanwhile taking on a stance that looks down on something as snobs do.

Punk: Punk is the subculture that values grit over sanitized versions of grit. Besides loyalty to local punk and metal bands, punks have a canon of accepted, well-known bands to enhance authenticity and increase their demonstrations of esoteric knowledge. These discussions revolve around esoteric knowledge of punk music to establish scene authenticity and moral superiority. They listen to the genre of punk rock and heavy metal. Punks are more inclusive than the hipsters: if a person possesses the right esoteric knowledge and demonstrates it properly, they can belong. The esoteric knowledge of punks reflects on how hardcore they are, how dedicated they are to their scene and to punk rock bands and artists that they considered authentic.

Scene: The scene provides the elements that create a sense of community. The scene includes the subculture, the public spaces, the merchandise and the lifestyle of the subculture. In Seattle's grunge scene in the early 1990s, the grunge hangouts and the music were parts of the scene and the alternative fans who were "grunge" (dressed scene and listened to the music) belonged to the subculture. The subculture can also be called scene members.

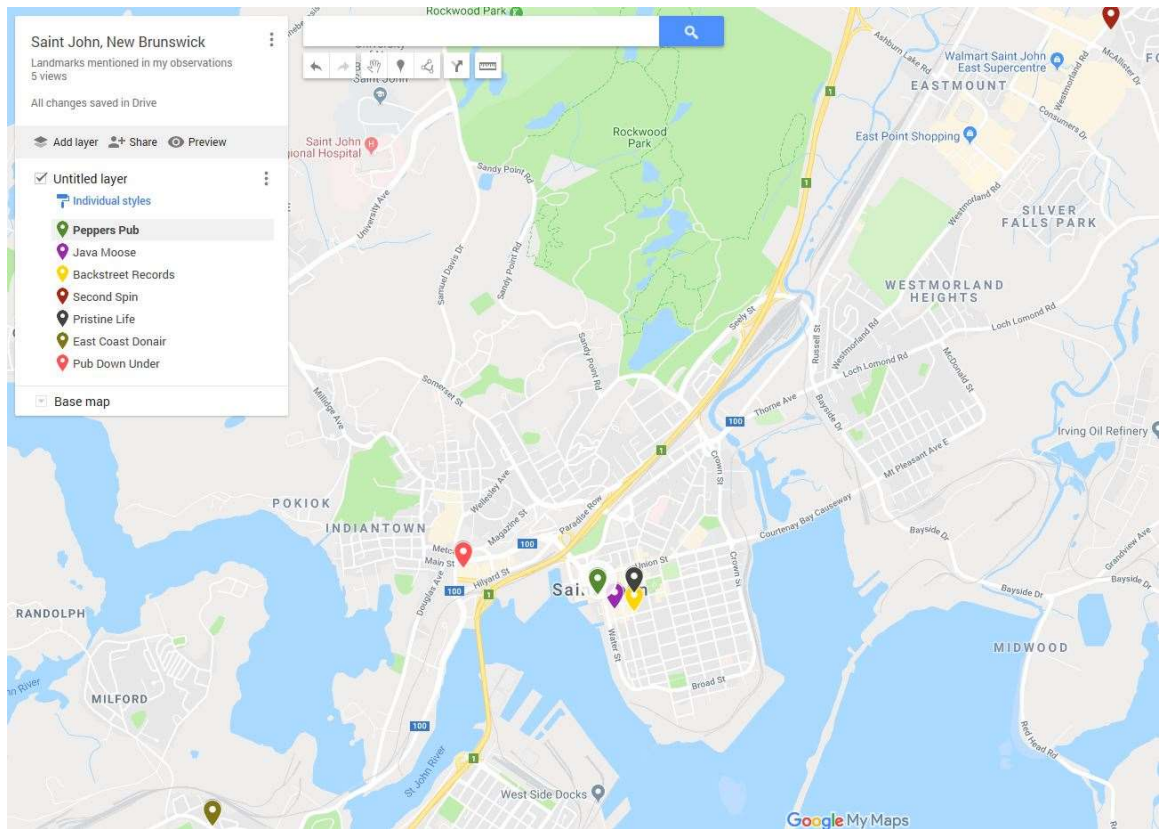
Scene Points: "Scene points" is a term that was used in the scenes during my observations. Scene points are not kept for an actual overall score. It is not an actual scoring system that ranks scene members by number. This term refers to gaining authenticity and is how scene members give each other nods of approval within the scene. During my observations, it was how the scene members evaluated authenticity – the scene members called achievements of authenticity "scene points."

Straight World: These are the people that live a structured nine-to-five life based on income and commodities. Borrowed from gay culture, the term "straight world" has been

used by subcultures. Throughout my observations, “straight world” was used more often than “mainstream world,” “dom world” (short for dominant world), “society” or the “real world.”

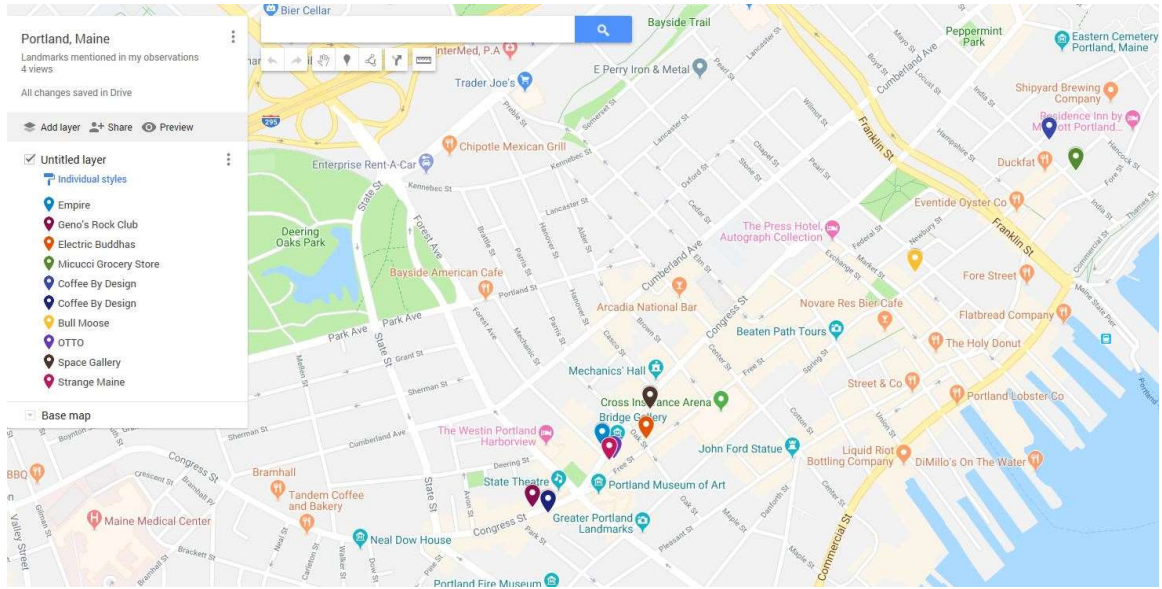
Subculture: Subcultures are the groups of people (punk, hipsters) that form a scene (elements that create a sense of community: venues, hangouts and aftershows).

Appendix A: Map of Scene Spots in Saint John



Map Created by using Google Maps 2019

Appendix B: Map of Scene Spots in Portland



Stephanie A. Cormier

Universities Attended

- 2010-present **Master of Arts**, Interdisciplinary Studies, University of New Brunswick Saint John (a one year medical leave in 2013-2014)
Thesis: *It's Hip to Be Scene: Authenticity, Esoteric Knowledge and Subcultural Style in Saint John and Portland.*
Supervisor: Dr. June Madeley
- 2008-2010 **Second Same Degree, Bachelor of Arts**, Information and Communication Studies, University of New Brunswick Saint John
- 2001-2005 **Bachelor of Arts**, Double Major in Political Science and Philosophy

Conferences Presentations

- 2019 **Qualitative Analysis Conference**, presentation "It's Hip To Be Scene: Ethnographic Research of Subcultures Via Participant Observation."
- 2015 **UNB Graduate Research Conference**, presentation "It's Hip To Be Scene: Subcultural Power In The City."
- 2011 **UNBSJ Graduate Research Conference**, presentation "The Economies of Cities: Urban Functionality and Local Businesses."

Publications: None

Research Experience

- 2010-present **Graduate Student**, Department of Social Sciences, University of New Brunswick Saint John
- Jan 2011-Sept 2011 **Research Assistant**, The Urban and Community Studies Institute, University of New Brunswick
- Jan 2011-Sept 2011 **Research Assistant**, Translating work from French to English (the research of Jacques Donzelot) for research purposes with Dr. Chris Doran